VERY FAR WEST INDEED

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ROUGH EXPERIENCES

ON

THE NORTH-WEST PACIFIC COAST

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A FEW ROUGH EXPERIENCES

ON

THE NORTH-WEST PACIFIC COAST

BY

R. BYRON JOHNSON

LONDON
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PREFACE.

The Author, in dedicating this work to the public, does so in the modest hope that its contents, which are for the most part a mere record of personal experiences, may afford, to any one desirous of gaining it, some insight into the mode of life and character of society existing in the distant part of the world in which those experiences occurred. Perhaps, also, the story of some years' adventures, of a tolerably varied and exciting nature, may be of interest to ordinary readers. If, above all, the Author may be able by these pages in the slightest manner to assist or guide the judgment of a brother emigrant, he will feel that his labour has not been ill spent.

The book has no pretensions to a scientific or theoretic basis. The Author has sought to be practical, and, by showing the various phases which ordinary men seeking

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their fortunes in wild countries may expect to encounter, to enable the general public to form their own conclusions: if he has been betrayed, here and and there, into theories or conclusions of his own which may be at war with received opinions, he can only, without seeking to deprecate criticism, beg indulgence on the score that such theories or conclusions are outside the general tenor and intention of his work.

London, 1872.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE START	1
II.	SAN FRANCISCO	16
III.	THE ARRIVAL	31
IV.	VANCOUVER'S ISLAND	42
V.	UP THE COUNTRY	54
VI.	THE ROAD	68
VII.	THE NOBLE SAVAGE	83
VIII.	THE ROAD AGAIN	94
IX.	WILLIAM'S CREEK	112
X.	BOATING ON THE FRASER	128
XI.	A HOLIDAY	143
XII.	WINTERING IN VICTORIA	160
XIII.	ANOTHER TURN AT THE MINES	175
XIV.	'RUSTLING'	191
XV.	MORE RUSTLING	206
XVI.	AN UNPLEASANT ADVENTURE	219
XVII.	A BARE ESCAPE OR TWO	237
XVIII.	THE LAST CHANCE.	252
	CONCLUSION	268

VERY FAR WEST INDEED.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

Some years ago a great cry was raised concerning a country one hears of now but seldom: that country was British Columbia. Glowing letters appeared in the *Times*, referring to its enormous wealth in gold mines, and the new and vast fields for enterprise offered to the emigrant upon its shores.

Being at that time a youngster possessed strongly with the Anglo-Saxon spirit of adventure, I was a good deal impressed by these advertisements; particularly as the isolation of the colony from the rest of the civilised world, and its wild and unexplored state, rather added a charm of romance to its other attractions; so a chance acquaintance with a man lately returned from Australia, who purposed nibbling again at the golden bait held forth from this far-west quarter of the globe, induced me to offer to accompany him in the search of adventure and lucre.

My new friend had not been by any means fortunate in Australia, having in fact been recently shipped home in the capacity of what the Yankees call a 'dead-head,' through the good offices of the authorities at Melbourne—that is to say, he was granted a free-passage as a 'distressed British subject.' But, even as the gambler says, 'the next pleasure to that of gaining is that of losing,' so the recountal of his reverses sounded to me only a little less pleasantly exciting than if he had been able to narrate his experiences in the light of a new-made Crœsus. In the latter event he would probably have been but a very dull fellow indeed, and would have disgusted one with his airs, after all.

Very soon we had framed our plans, packed our kits, and taken our passages for El Dorado (*viâ* the Isthmus of Panama and San Francisco) on the West India Mail Steamer from Southampton. About a hundred and fifty kindred spirits were bound with us in the steerage, creating quite a sensation in the midst of the smooth, placid, aristocratic traffic of that eminently respectable steam-ship line. They didn't forget to make us pay for the luxury of the sensation either; a piece of short-sightedness which helped the pockets of the rival Liverpool lines considerably.

We in the steerage were a very mixed lot, although most of us were (unluckily for us, perhaps) of a good deal better class, so far as antecedents go, than the ordinary run of passengers. There were many clerks

and young men of that stamp, who had never done a stroke of manual labour in their lives; not a few sons of clergymen (who generally turned out great scamps); several men of university training; a few Israelites, bent on trading, with a small equipment of 'Brummagem' and Whitechapel rubbish, and their own acuteness for a stock (the Jews are always the gold-seekers' jackals); and some hard sun-burnt fellows in rough miner's dress, who, like my companion, had left other gold countries to try their luck in the new one. These last were our heroes. When one of them seated himself anywhere, a circle of 'new chums' was soon formed round him, begging stories of his adventures, and gathering fragments of advice. The advice generally tendered was, that the listeners were a pack of young fools, and that they had better all go back by the next steamer. There were some young women too, ostensibly in the dressmaking and 'school-marm' interest, but really, I fancy, with much stronger views in their minds towards matrimony, or money without marriage, than aught else; and I am bound to say that this portion of our company succeeded in the end to better advantage than the rest.

The voyage out to the West Indies was very pleasant, in spite of the inconveniences of roughing it on board ship.

I think 'caste' is the first thing (sea-sickness excepted) that strikes one when he gets into blue-water.

There are the saloon passengers, composed chiefly of Spanish grandees and their families, and newly-married officers, regimental doctors, and chaplains bound for West India stations, with a few merchants thrown in: they are headed by a sort of vigilance committee, made up of one or two elderly and talkative old gentlemen, who have made the voyage once or twice before. These old gentlemen exercise the most despotic sway over the unhappy herd, and are always recognisable by a sort of be-tarpaulined horse-marine get-up which they affect. They bore the captain and the rest of the officers of the ship incessantly with absurd nautical questions they hardly know the meaning of, with the view of further impressing their superabundant knowledge and dignity upon the foolish, untravelled mass. They are always in the way of the sailors, and sometimes get rewarded (accidentally of course) by sprawling over a stray rope, or getting a souse from a slush-bucket. Generally there are one or two old lady horse-marines, too, who keep the female part of their community under still stricter discipline.

It is a point of honour with a saloon passenger never to have anything to say to a second-class passenger; the *canaille* in the steerage are of course out of the question.

The second-cabin people are a weak, inoffensive race, who are happy on the made-up remains of the saloon dinner. They may often be seen watching hungrily round

the chief cabin entrance, peering anxiously into the returning dishes, which they will shortly be able to recognise at their own spread. At such times there is much 'tipping' of stewards, and a regular system of pre-emption seems to exist. 'Steward! that half chicken' (movement of the hand towards the steward's extended palm). 'I say, Steward, *you* know, that bit of curry' (more palm oil). 'Apricot tart to-day, my eye!' (a wink and a chink) &c., &c. If any one takes the trouble to lord it over these respectable folk, it is usually the sleek young Dissenting missionary, who rigidly tabooes novels and cards, and convenes the faithful to frequent prayer; enlivening their evenings by stories of frightful shipwrecks, fires at sea, and the never-ending fires the non-elect may expect for their portion hereafter.

It is a point of honour with a second-cabin passenger never to have anything to say to a steerage passenger —they are rather afraid of them in fact—and to try all means to cultivate a sneaking round-the-mast sort of acquaintance with one first-class swell if possible: in the exercise of this laudable aspiration they bear many snubbings with great equanimity.

The steerage crowd are an independent lot generally, and the exclusiveness of the upper classes is rather thrown away so far as they are concerned. Many of them, it is regrettable to state, have no points of honour worth mentioning.

There was a good sturdy spirit of hope prevalent amongst us young adventurers (it formed the greater part of our capital) and I think we were as happy a crew as could be ordinarily met with. Loafing about, basking in the brilliant tropical sun tempered by the sea-breezes, or seeking the shade of the bulwarks or forecastle, with pipe always in mouth, till meal-times were announced, when we demolished our rough fare with wondrous appetites: watching *bonitos*, flying-fish, and sharks; playing deck-quoits or whist (precious badly too) and gambling in many ways; dancing hornpipes and reels, boxing, and sky-larking generally; that's how we got over the time, without a thought towards to-morrow, except as the day that was to bring us fortune.

Hope is, no doubt, one of the best things in the way of sentiment that a man can carry about with him, but unfortunately it is frequently an enemy to material progress. There are too many of us of the Micawber type, ready to spend to-morrow's sustenance for to-day's enjoyment, and then hope for 'something to turn up.' Now, this book may meet the eye of an intending emigrant, and I would venture, if I may do so without being accused of preaching, to direct his attention to the moral which may be gathered from my own experiences, personal and otherwise. In the first place, then, brother emigrant, stick tight to those good sovereigns in your waist-belt—especially be

careful with whom you gamble on board ship. You will want all your money when you arrive at your destination, to enable you to look about for a path to strike out in. If you are going 'on spec,' rough it from the start: don't spend half your money in an outfit, which will only be a nuisance to you, and a drug in the market when you want to sell it—as you certainly will: a spare shirt is easily bought when required, and if such a purchase is not easy, you must fain submit to a little inconvenience. Remember that after all, in any place, it is hard to get out of the groove when once in it, and that if you land without money, and have to take to breaking stones to keep you alive, you won't so readily rise to anything better.

To return to our journey: after changing steamer at the pretty little town of St. Thomas, with its three hills, we reached Colon or Aspinwall, and entered the 'cars' for Panama. The railroad is only forty-eight miles across, but it seems to take about six hours to make the trip.

I noticed a great personage in white linen get on board the train. Presently he looked round for his luggage, and discovered part of it was missing. By this time we had started, and got about two hundred yards from the station. Looking back, I saw a nigger, with an enormous carpet bag, running up the track, and making frantic gestures. I spoke to the guard or conductor, who was an American, asking if he was

going to pull up for the nigger, who was toiling along so gamely.

'I guess not!' he said, 'ef he's only haaf a nigger, he'll ketch us up afore we cud stop.'

And the coloured person kept bravely on, getting nearer and nearer, till we could hear him puffing. Then putting on a big spurt he reached the train, caught hold of the railing round the platform, shied the bag on board, and hauled himself in after it.

'Good nigger!' shouted the conductor, approvingly.

'Deuced bad train!' I replied. 'Don't you ever go any faster than this?'

'Darsn't, jest here; shud go ker-flop inter that etarnal swamp in about tu minutes an' a haaf!'

I wanted to treat the nigger to a drink at the bar (nearly all American trains have got a bar); but I shall never forget the look of horror with which this proposition was received by the intelligent personage of high-toned and elegant appearance, who dispensed his wondrous fluids at that little counter.

First, he swore a string of heart-breaking oaths, then he expectorated freely and took fresh breath, smashing a tumbler in his excitement; after which, seeing my confusion, and getting mollified, he said:—

'Ah, well! I see, stranger; yu ain't ercustomed to free institooshins, yu hev bin raised whar they regards them things (jerking his fore-finger at the wretched panting nigger) as human critters a'most. But don't

you never aask no more niggers to drink at *my* bar, 'else thar'll be a muss, sure!'

So I gave the unfortunate negro a quarter dollar instead, and made friends with the bar-keeper; who was a good sort of fellow, apart from what I then thought his undue prejudice against colour in his own species (I have grown to think a good deal with him since). He made me an A 1 mint-julep, for which he would not hear of payment. This, I think, was the turning point in his favour with me.

Panama, we found, was a dirty old hole, though surrounded with the most glorious scenery; there was nothing about it worth seeing, or thinking of, but its ruins and associations with the Elizabethan vikings who had haunted it. There was, as usual, a revolution going on when we got there. A good many long Spanish steel guns were running about with tiny little men, and shot themselves off now and then to the great terror of their holders. A youth with a very long sword dashed about, poked the terrific weapon through a shutter, in the wild excitement of pursuing an imaginary foe, and couldn't get it back again; after which he seemed to think soldiering a bad game, kicked a quiet chicken and a somnolent pig viciously, and fell in with our party to beg a light for his cigar.

The revolution was over next day; all the inhabitants once more turned their attention to their wonted occupation of fleecing their visitors for the few days they

had the chance of doing so; till after these were gone, bad blood should again rise, and cause the slaughter of a few stray dogs and cormorants. By the way, the latter creatures, called 'scavenger-birds,' are the only sanitary inspectors of this and similar towns; they devour all the filth and garbage, which is simply thrown into the street, and it is a matter of a heavy fine to kill one of these birds intentionally.

The local paper appeared next morning with the fresh government programme, and an apology for the previous edition not having been issued.

EDITORIAL.

We have been made the victims of shameful coercion! The miscreants who have long usurped the reins of power, the carrion who have now been swept into the dust-heap of oblivion by the righteous arm of —— (I forget the name of this bloodless warrior) endeavoured to enforce upon us a degrading requisition. Their last stronghold had been almost forced, and their ammunition was nearly spent—fruitlessly, God be thanked—they had stolen all the lead from the roof of the only church they could get at, and they threatened to take from us—nay, not from *us*, but from the inhabitants of Panama, from the whole world—our breath of life, our TYPE!!! With this the insensate scoundrels would have made bullets, and preserved longer the unholy fight of crime and villany against justice and right. Our determination prevented this catastrophe. We defied the impious wolves; and by the blessing of the Almighty, aided by an iron shutter (these may be obtained in lots to suit, from the store of our esteemed friends,

Fernandez y Ca.; a fresh shipment having just arrived from New York) and a notice in large letters intimating that there was a navy revolver on the premises which *might* go off and hit somebody, our invaluable plant was kept inviolate. One or two approaches were made towards the premises; but the warning bark of our sentinel, our noble dog, was sufficient to scare away these intruders. They fled. Under the circumstances detailed, the Pacific Coast will excuse the loss it has sustained in the omission of our last semi-weekly edition.

We stayed at Panama a few days, astonishing the natives by going out, in true English fashion, to shoot birds in the neighbouring woods, in the middle of a tropical day. We got a bag of wondrously-plumed creatures, and one or two lizards and snakes. We further outraged the popular local notion of the fitness of things by bathing in the bay, which was full of sharks—a circumstance we had not thought of. Luckily the sharks didn't know there were any such foolish people about, and through their not being on the *qui vive* nothing untoward happened.

The residents seem to do nothing in the day but drink incessantly of iced liquids and play billiards on wooden tables with the largest balls and hugest cues ever seen. When overcome by this exercise they sleep till the sun gets low, and then they stroll on the plaza. There is always a plaza in a Spanish town, or village even, be it never so insignificant a place. After this more billiards and iced drinks, and then more sleep.

The women are always either in-doors or in the churches, the latter being about as numerous as the bar-rooms.

We were very tired of the place by the time the passengers from New York came in, and we were then shipped on an American steamer for San Francisco, with a complement of *only* fifteen hundred passengers.

Uncle Sam doesn't exercise that fatherly care over his children on board ship that John Bull does, hence the steerage of a Yankee steamboat, with nine hundred people packed below-decks, like herrings in a barrel, is not quite so pleasant a place as it might be. Most of the new arrivals were Irish and Low Dutch, and as neither their habits nor their persons were particularly cleanly, I can assure my readers that a pig-stye which has not been cleaned out for a twelvemonth would be a nosegay compared to the place where we were expected to turn in. Our bunks consisted of three tiers of filthy canvas stretchers, supported by upright frames; these stretchers extended along both sides of the ship and down the centre, in a fore and aft direction. They were occupied by the unfortunate people four-abreast, and I have been told as a literal fact, by a shipmate who remained below, that turning over was a matter of mutual arrangement, as any movement of the kind, owing to the limited space, was bound to be a concerted one. For my own part, I preferred to spread my blanket on the upper deck under the stars, taking the chances of being kicked and sworn at by the watch for

being in the way, or of getting a sousing from the hose in the morning when the order came to 'wash decks,' to sharing the unsavoury den below.

The eating arrangements were equally enticing; our food (of which there was certainly rough plenty) was served on swing tables let down from the upper deck. We had to stand at them, and lucky were those who could get standing room. The tables had to be cleared and reset three times at every meal on account of the number of passengers, and there was always a regular free fight for places at the first and second tables. Then, if you got a place, it would probably be right up in the bows, where there was a good chance of getting kicked or butted by the cattle, which were cooped up there, poor things, in about the same manner as we were below, and with about the same regard to cleanliness. In rough weather it is easy to imagine, under the circumstances, that more of the provisions found their way over one's clothes than into one's mouth. Fortunately there is not much bad weather on that coast.

In spite of these drawbacks we were all merry enough, and looked forward with much interest to our arrival at San Francisco, about which town we had heard much, both at home and on our way. Those who had revolvers were to be seen busily cleaning them up ready for use, for San Francisco had not then outlived its reputation as the most lawless place in the world.

I remember that on this part of our journey the anniversary of Her Majesty's birthday occurred, and I have no doubt it would have given our Sovereign Lady much joy to have seen the animated way in which the English portion of our shipmates gave vent to their feelings on that occasion. Unhappily one of them carried his enthusiasm to such an extent as to fall foul of a particularly quick-tempered Western man, who in the heat of argument drew his six-shooter, and our compatriot, bolting through the cabin door, received a parting shot in a portion of his body which could not be used for its normal function of occupying a chair for some days. The Western man was put in irons for a day or two *pro formâ*, and was then released on his promise to be of good behaviour. The matter finally ended by a hand-shake and liquor-up between the parties.

On our way up the coast of Mexico we put in at Acapulco to coal, and had the pleasure of a run ashore and a dainty feed of fowls and omelettes. Poultry appeared to be the only live-stock in the place except vermin.

The only remarkable thing here was the semi-aqueous nature of the natives, who swam out in hundreds to the steamer, and appeared to spend the greater part of the day in the water. There were any number of sharks to be seen swimming round the ship all the time, but the darkies didn't seem to care a bit for them. All

carried knives in a belt round their waists, and laughed if you asked them if they weren't afraid of the sharks. They dived in ten fathoms of water for the small silver coins we threw overboard to them, and most of them got a pretty good mouthful of ten-cent pieces by the time our largess was exhausted. I should think the heat causes the natives to take to the water so much, for Acapulco must be nearly the hottest place on this earth at any rate.

A few days after leaving this wayside oven we entered the Golden Gate, the entrance to the magnificent harbour of San Francisco, much rejoiced at the prospect of a speedy release from our filthy prison. Most of our shipmates were bound no further, and as there was no steamer for some days to carry us to Vancouver's Island, we anticipated with considerable pleasure the idea of our temporary sojourn in the Golden City.

CHAPTER II.

SAN FRANCISCO.

Previous to the year '49, the site which the town of San Francisco now occupies was not a scene to excite the admiration of either a lover of nature or a devotee of commerce.

In fact, half of the site was then occupied by the shallow waters of the bay; and the other half was a mere heap of sand-hills, almost devoid of vegetation. The holy fathers of the Mission Dolores, and a few straggling settlers and fishermen, composed the population of the neighbourhood. A more peaceful spot, and one more likely, to all appearance, to continue so, could hardly have been found upon the surface of the earth.

Such, however, is the wonderfully attractive power of gold, that at the end of the year above mentioned, when the first influx of gold-seekers commenced, there could not have been less than eighty thousand people herded together near the place that is now the metropolis of the North Pacific. The harbour, whose waters had seldom been stirred by any more pretentious craft than an Indian canoe or a fisherman's boat, sud-

denly became filled with the vessels of every nation; and few of these were able to leave until after many months, from the impossibility of retaining the crews they brought, or of hiring fresh ones for a return voyage. Among the old 'forty-niners,' as the now remaining pioneers of the country are proud to style themselves, it is curious to note, when one sees them at work in the mines, the large number whose tattooed arms show what their calling once was. A vast assemblage of tents whitened the shores of the bay, far almost as the eye could reach; and from the midst sprung up, as if by magic, huge wooden stores, hotels, and buildings of every description.

Truly, the energy exhibited in building this city, and overcoming the natural disadvantages of its position, was, and still is, immense. No town of equal magnitude or importance (save Melbourne, perhaps) has ever come into existence in the short space of twenty years. The sand-hills have been literally shovelled and carted into the sea, and each burrowing made in the sand forms a corresponding space reclaimed from the harbour. Even at the present day the lower part of the town is built entirely on piles; and the space beneath the houses, formerly occupied by water, but now generally left dry, owing to the work of filling up constantly extending itself in front, forms the home of myriads of rats, dogs, and escaped pigs; who, owing to the plentiful supply of refuse, seem to live together

in a state of undisturbed enjoyment and continuous repletion. On the whole, a visit to this quarter makes one reflect with some gratulation on the fact that cholera is unknown on the Pacific Coast.

It is not to be wondered at that, in its early days, a place offering such wondrous attractions to all classes of fortune-hunters as California did, should have been the home of a greater number of thorough-paced scoundrels than the collected vice of the rest of the world could well have produced. Mexican horse thieves and bandits, runaway Australian convicts, gamblers from all the cities of the Union, border ruffians from the Western States, and rogues of different degrees from all parts, were abundant; the revolver and the bowie-knife were the aggressors and the arbiters, and justice was a farce.

To such a pass had this state of things arrived, that four or five years later the honest portion of the community of the city came to the conclusion that nothing less than extreme measures could produce a reaction; and, on the principle of the end justifying the means, the administration of justice was taken entirely out of the hands of the regular authorities, and placed in those of a Vigilance Committee selected from the citizens. All suspected persons were warned to quit the neighbourhood within twenty-four hours, upon pain of death if they were found afterwards; and all those against whom the slightest evidence of theft, or crimes

of greater magnitude, could be adduced, were forthwith executed according to Lynch law. Among those who met their fate in this summary way was one of the former judges, who was proved to have been a member of an organised band of robbers and assassins.

These remedial measures soon had the desired effect —although it is to be feared that many innocent persons were sufferers—and the town has since gradually become as safe as most others, with a good deal of additional licence in a social sense however.

It was on a Sunday that we entered the harbour, and we expected to find everything very quiet in consequence. We were therefore much surprised, as the steamer drew up alongside one of the long lines of wooden wharves, to see all the hotels and bar-rooms open and in full swing, and to hear the rattle of billiard balls coming from out of most of them; we also found on inquiry that the theatres would be open in the evening.

The scene indeed was most enlivened. The wharves and streets were crowded with people, some hurrying to meet friends and relatives on board our steamer coming from the east, and others bound on excursions to Oaklands and the various places on the borders of this hugest of harbours. The bustle and noise were terrific. The row caused by the numberless omnibuses, drays, and street cars, running over the plank roads, was deafening; and this was supplemented by the hoarse

hooting of the various steamboat whistles, the incessant buzz of the hotel touters, the cracking of whips, and curses at unwilling quadrupeds; forming altogether a Babel which it is hardly possible to realise without actual experience.

After a great deal of hard fighting had been going on for the possession of our luggage between the representatives of the various hotels (amongst whom were a dirty-faced Irishman, with still dirtier linen; a stolid gentleman from the Vaterland, whose only chance of attracting attention was his vast size; a particularly lively Frenchman; and a regular New York tout, with sham diamond studs and enormous pinchbeck chain) my friend and myself got into the omnibus of an unpretentious house, situate in one of the streets at right angles to the main thoroughfare, Montgomery Street. We were lucky enough to have been able to keep our baggage intact, and we found nearly fifty hotel cards in our hands and pockets when we once got fairly seated.

Hotel life in America is, to my mind, so infinitely preferable (to a bachelor) to that in England, as to be almost beyond comparison. There is, however, one strong point against American hotels—the bed-rooms are seldom up to the mark, as they are usually very small, not over clean in themselves, and furnished with a similar disregard to ablutional facilities to that found in hotels on the European Continent.

Probably the usages of society in America contribute

principally to the traveller's greater enjoyment of hotel life. In the first place, you haven't to shut yourself up behind a newspaper in a coffee-room for an hour or two, hungry and tired before you get anything to eat. In the better class of houses there is always a restaurant, in which you may at any hour obtain whatever you wish in a few minutes. In the next place, you don't run the risk of being snubbed if you address your conversation to a neighbour. On the contrary, if you are a stranger, your neighbour will generally strive to make you feel at home with the place, taking upon himself, in a measure, if his advances are not repulsed, the *rôle* of a private host. People talk a good deal of the impertinent curiosity displayed by our trans-Atlantic cousins, but I think there is more of the kindly feeling I have last spoken of actuating them than aught else. Moreover, their manner is genial, and their curiosity does not usually take an offensive turn; and it is certain that when the Englishman's reserve once wears off, he is always one of the strongest advocates of a freer intercourse among people thrown together in a casual way.

Living is cheap in San Francisco, the charge for board and lodging at the best houses not exceeding three dollars a day. There are reading, smoking, and billiard-rooms, of the most luxurious kind, and many things that remind one rather of a club-house than of one of our hotels, where a new guest is imprisoned

with a lot of heavy old mahogany furniture, a time-table three months old, a set of writing materials which he is too disheartened to use, and a Bible which has apparently never been opened, till he finally reaches so melancholy a state that he fears to break the unholy spell by ringing for the ghostly waiter, lest that white-chokered apparition should make him unwittingly order his coffin instead of his dinner.

There are many peculiar features of the larger towns in the United States. One of these, in cities which like San Francisco have a large German population, is the 'lager-beer cellar.' Your approach to an establishment of this sort as you walk along a street in the evening, is made known by the sound of subterranean music reaching your ears. You peep down the cellar, and your steps probably follow your eyes. On one side of an extensive underground saloon is a bar decorated in the most gorgeous manner, and frequently in the most excellent taste, behind which a resplendent individual, in all the glory of a snowy 'biled shirt' and diamond brooch-pin, is pouring out the foaming 'lager' into glass mugs, or concocting delicious compounds. Pretty waitresses are flitting about bearing these beverages to the thirsty occupants of the little marble tables, who are generally engaged in card-playing, varied by occasional flirtation with their fair Hebes. At the other end is a band playing German airs, or selections from the Operas, sometimes with vocal

accompaniment, while in the centre are several billiard-tables, or an open space is reserved for dancing. The effect on the eye and ear is pleasing, and I don't suppose these places have half as much to answer for on the ground of morality as a London music-hall.

Another singular institution connected with bar-rooms is what is termed a 'free lunch.' A uniform price is charged for a 'drink' of any sort, and in the case of spirits a decanter and a tumbler are placed before the customer, who helps himself without restriction as to quantity. A collation is spread, to which the guest is expected (as of course with the liquor also) to help himself moderately. Presumably, the average consumption on either head is not in excess of the price paid, or the establishments would soon have to close their doors; but the 'free lunch' practice tends to support an army of loafers in idleness, each one of them being able to pay his 'bit,' or 'quarter-dollar,' (sixpence or a shilling) and to gorge sufficient at one meal to keep him supplied, like a boa-constrictor, till he is ready for the next. When these customers become known they are usually treated with a surreptitious dose of jalap or croton oil, which makes them wary of repeating their visits.

Talking of a 'bit,' that is another decidedly peculiar institution, and peculiar, moreover, to the North Pacific coast. It is a visible invisibility. It is supposed to represent half of a quarter-dollar, or twelve-and-a-half cents;

but it has no actual existence in the United States' coinage; there is no copper money current on the coast, and the nearest approach to a 'bit' is a ten-cent piece. The consequence is there is always a difficulty in paying for an article where a 'bit' is the price asked, or in receiving change under the same conditions. Awkwardly enough, the price of nearly everything is a 'bit,' or has an odd 'bit' imported into it; thus, if you want a cigar, a glass of beer, a nip of brandy, to have your boots cleaned, or to be shaved, the charge is a 'bit,' and if you go into a restaurant to dine, your bill is five 'bits,' or seven 'bits.' Everybody tries to get the best of the exchange, too. If you tender a quarter of a dollar you receive ten cents in change; if you tender a ten cent piece you are looked at surlily, and put down for a 'mean cuss.' The whole system is an absurdity, and ought at once to be stopped. To do this the prices ought to be made either ten cents or fifteen cents, and then there never could be a difficulty.

Even Americans from the East are as much nonplussed as foreigners in relation to this singular mode of payment. They don't know what a 'bit' is. One of our fellow-passengers, a tolerably green youth from Vermont, got into sore trouble about it directly he landed.

He wanted to go to some friends he had in a suburb of the city, and hailed a carriage. When he got to the end he asked the fare.

'A dollar and two bits,' was the reply.

'Bits, bits?' he questioned, 'I hain't got no bits. I kin only pay yu in dollars an' cents.'

'Well, no matter, sir,' said the hack-driver; 'you can pay me a dollar an' a haaf.' And he was paid.

But our Eastern friend's suspicions were aroused, and questioning his host, he found he had been done. Smarting under the swindle (the sorest of all points when personally applied to one of these gentry from the wooden nutmeg country), he sallied forth to find the driver, and failing in the attempt marched into a neighbouring liquor store, to solace his wounded feelings with a refresher.

Then, as he told me, he 'put himself outside of some Bourbon whisky.'

He tendered a quarter-dollar in payment, and received ten cents change. A gentleman beside him helped himself from the same decanter, and gave a ten-cent piece. He felt himself again swindled in the clearest fashion to the extent of five cents; and, with the recollection of the cab-driver still rankling in his mind, he felt his biceps beginning to contract.

'Here, you miserable cheat!' he called to the barkeeper, 'What do you mean by this barefaced swindle!'

'D——n you!' that functionary returned, 'you must be drunk to use such language. Clear out, you dirty loafer!'

This was too much for the Vermonter; he let loose with his left, and caught the barkeeper on the nose. He was immediately seized by a dozen or more people, licked unmercifully, and finally kicked into the street. On being picked up by a sympathising looker-on, he asked him what was the price of a drink at that saloon.

'A bit,' said the bystander.

So, in despair, he went back to his friend's house, where all the satisfaction he got for his recital was being tremendously laughed at.

Reverting to 'loafing,' however, it is a thoroughly recognised principle in San Francisco. There are many of the body who practise it there held in much too high esteem by the community at large to allow of practical jokes in the jalap way being played upon them.

The king of the fraternity for a long time was (and probably still is, if whisky hasn't killed him yet) a man nicknamed 'Emperor Norton,' whose photograph as a local celebrity figured in most of the book-stores. His singular appearance, no doubt, largely aided his popularity. A large stout man, clad in the cast-off uniform (much too small for him) of a Federal officer, with a jolly rubicund visage, and a large bottle-nose, at the end of which grew a perfect imperial of black bushy hair, and with little sparkling eyes that bespoke the witty, incorrigible rogue who owned them.

This fellow has never been known to do a stroke of

work in his life, but it is the fashion to chaff him, and he lives, not upon chaff certainly, but upon the strength of being the town-butt. He and 'Billy,' the fireman's dog, were the most noted characters in San Francisco. Poor 'Billy' is dead now; so Emperor Norton, if he survives, is the sole lion.

It is a recognised thing, if Emperor is present in a bar when two or more people go in to drink, that he should be requested to join; and as he always *is* in some bar or other (especially among those in which free lunches play a part), Emperor never goes to bed without what is aptly, if vulgarly, called a 'skin-full.'

He is a very good advertisement to some of these houses, and is therefore never at a loss for a bed, or an odd half-dollar to buck away at the gaming-table. He proudly scorns all attire, save military garments; and when any resident officer finds his regimentals growing shabby, he forthwith invites Emperor to take them. It is impossible to conjecture how many suits his Imperial Majesty has thus stowed away, for I don't think there's any one in the 'old clo' way in those parts.

There are few places of the same size more gay and full of life than 'Frisco.' It is in three principal sections. The lower one, near the water, is the business part of the city, and is almost entirely occupied by wholesale stores and warehouses, with the inevitable

bar-room interspersed at very frequent intervals; the wharves and nearer portion of the harbour are crowded with steamers and vessels from all parts of the world, and the view over the harbour is most magnificent, owing to its enormous extent. The central one is the haunt of luxury for the whole Northern Pacific. It is composed of Montgomery Street, and the other streets close adjoining, which resemble a combination of the Strand and Regent Street as nearly as it is possible to describe them. In this portion all the principal hotels and retail stores, and the theatres, are to be found; and here one sees the pink of fashion, male and female—the latter a very exaggerated copy of Parisian style twelve months preceding. Light buggies and handsome trotting-horses are constantly going and coming from here to the upper part of the town, which contains the villas of the wealthy residents, and is continued to the verge of the sandhills, transforming the latter, as it extends itself upon their surfaces, into a series of little dotted toy-box Paradises.

The streets appear to be always alive with traffic of every kind, and crowded with people of every nation and class, and every one is too cosmopolitan to notice his neighbour's peculiarities. The Chinese form a large section of the population, and live in a separate quarter, which I would not advise any one with a delicate sense of smell to enter without a smelling-

bottle at his nose. The number of theatres, music-halls, dancing-rooms, lager-beer cellars, and bar and billiard-rooms, is prodigious, and there are a good many gambling hells, which the town authorities are not supposed to countenance now the town has grown moral, and are kept a little more out of sight. There are a fine Roman Catholic Cathedral and many good public buildings, including schools, colleges, and hospitals; but on the whole there is a striking deficiency of places for religious uses.

Although the immediate surroundings of the town are of a barren aspect, and the climate is hardly desirable owing to a cold blast which blows in from the sea at mid-day all through the year, filling the eyes and mouth and every available pore with the all-pervading sand, the country a short distance away and the climate are equally delightful.

We had many charming excursions in the neighbourhood, and my companion and I could well have wished to stay longer had time or our finances permitted it; but, as neither did, we booked our passages for Vancouver's Island in company with the greater number of our fellow-passengers from England. It grieves me to state that one of those who stayed behind did so against his will, on account of a misunderstanding as to the ownership of two or three watches, rings, and suits of clothes at his hotel. It is with some counter satisfaction however, that I here proclaim the fact that

the delinquent was not a steerage passenger, but a newly-effected convert and ardent disciple of the Rev. Lakofyr N. Brimstun, of the second cabin.

We were joined in our northward path by three or four hundred Californian miners, whom the noise of the new gold-fields was attracting to British territory.

CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL.

The remainder of our voyage was more pleasant than the portion between Panama and San Francisco, there being far fewer passengers and a consequent improvement in the general comfort.

As we neared our destination, a marked change might have been observed creeping over all the 'green' hands. We had been, so far, looking on the whole thing very much in the light of a pleasure trip; but we all knew now that we had many stern realities to face, and that for most of us life was just commencing.

In these few days the reckless air of gaiety that had pervaded the company seemed to wear off, and a sort of nervous, restless, but still hopeful feeling, to take its place. The boy (few of us were much more) was suddenly converted into the man; friendships were cemented and joint plans framed; purses counted, often with rueful eyes; and portraits of mothers and sweethearts were brought out from hidden recesses and looked at more often than they had been in many weeks.

In striking opposition to all this was the mien and

conduct of the old stagers who had joined us. There are not many people who exhibit the same amount of stoicism and *sang froid* as the regular gold miner. Many runs of luck, good and bad—the bad too often preponderating—have rendered him, beyond the ordinary race of mortals, callous to surrounding circumstances. He is, in ordinary cases, found to be a man of a rugged though kindly disposition, and of a mood rather reserved and contemplative than otherwise; his solitary life, uncheered by the society of the softer sex, tending greatly no doubt to produce these characteristics. Not unfrequently his acquirements are far in advance of those one would expect to find in a person of his position, owing to his having availed himself, in his solitary leisure, of the solace to be found in books. Of course a reaction sometimes occurs, all the more violent in men of such a temperament, and when one of our friends does 'break out' upon some exceptional occasion, one might well be pardoned for looking for the traditional hoofs and horns of a well-known character in the person of the delinquent.

We youngsters were rather patronised in a good-natured, fatherly sort of way, by these 'honest miners,' who liked to hear us talk of home, recalling reminiscences of what was to most of them almost a forgotten subject; and we derived from them—though they were more apt at listening than talking—what should have been many valuable hints for our future guidance.

On the third night out we had a great fright. The

sea had been singularly calm all day, and appeared likely to continue so when we turned in; but about an hour or two afterwards I was awakened by a most terrific row. Lamps and unsecured movables of all sorts took a sudden run, and I found myself nearly standing on my head in my bunk, while many people were tumbled headlong out of their sleeping-places. A moment afterwards my position was almost diametrically reversed, and as soon as I could get myself together I sprang out, with the rest of us who hadn't been summarily pitched out, and all of us, save a fat old Dutchman who snored placidly through it all, made a rush for the deck, expecting that we were taking a short cut to the bottom.

Our fears on this score were dissipated when we saw that we were now going smoothly along as if nothing had happened; but far ahead of us we saw in the moonlight a huge smooth mountain of water rolling onwards at a swift pace. One of the officers told us that this wave was sometimes met with in the North Pacific, nearly always at a time when the sea was as calm as then, and that it was supposed to be the result of a submarine earthquake; further, that it had very nearly pooped us, and that 'he guessed fresh provisions were kinder played out till he got back to 'Frisco,' owing to the sheep and cattle being all washed overboard. And so we had again to betake ourselves to 'salt horse' as kindly as we might for a few days.

On the fifth day we entered the Straits of San Juan de Fuca, running between Vancouver Island and Washington territory, and hailed the sight of the westernmost possession of the empire 'on which the sun never sets.' A few hours after we anchored in the harbour of Esquimalt, the naval station of our North Pacific squadron, where two or three British men-of-war were lying sleepily on the smooth land-locked water, on which the encircling hills, with their pine-clad sides, were reflected as in a mirror.

It was a cheering sight to gaze once more on the symmetrical lines, tapering masts, and trim rigging of our beautiful swans of the ocean; but their appearance only made the sterile neighbouring country look more cheerless still. We were soon surrounded by multitudes of Indians in canoes, all chattering in a horrible guttural tongue, and presenting a strange appearance to our unsophisticated eyes; although they certainly seemed the most fitting inhabitants of the wild, desolate-looking place.

We all thought this was Victoria, the capital of the colony (a town, we had heard, of some five or six thousand inhabitants) but seeing only some dozen log huts and shanties built of boards, we were considerably disappointed with the supposed metropolis, and began to look at one another in some dismay, in which even the old hands appeared to take a share.

The little cluster of huts and shanties were dominated

by a more lordly-looking edifice, built of very solid logs, in front of which a gigantic spar was reared, bearing a flag upon which could be distinguished the letters, 'H. B. C.' (Hudson's Bay Company). Going upon the hurricane-deck to take a wider survey, I heard the following colloquy betwixt two old Californians, both of the broadest Western type, which didn't tend to improve my own first impressions:—

'Say, Bill! this yer's raythera one-hoss settlement, I guess. Whar be all the critters?'

'Caan't say. Reckon they lives underground, 'less they've turned Injins, and air retired into the wilderness to fix 'emselves up in thar war-paint.'

'Waall now, what's that ar flag, with them letters?'

Bill's attention thus directed, fastened itself on the prominent piece of bunting. After some consideration, and much expectoration, he slowly replied: 'Le'ss see, "B. C." in ancient history means "Before Christ," I b'lieve—'tleast so the school-marm used to tell when I was to school—tharfore, I calc'late "H. B. C." to mean "Here before Christ;" fur this 'tarnal location don't 'pear to've bin much overrun with strangers since that period. 'Guess I'll make tracks back to Californy right smart, yu bet!'

A change soon took place, however. Stages (consisting of wagon-boxes placed on the axle-trees, without attention to springs) and baggage-drays, the latter mostly under the guidance of negroes, began to draw up

in considerable numbers, along the only wharf the harbour boasted; and we then heard, to our surprise and joy, that Victoria was situate in another harbour three miles away, too shallow to admit vessels of a large class; and that Sambo or Cuffey was prepared to transfer our belongings and ourselves to the immediate resting-place of our hopes, at the small charge of 'haf a dollar ahead, sar.'

Consigning our traps to the custody of an enterprising darkey, whose well-fed mule appeared to be equal to his load, a party of a dozen or two of us started along on foot, keeping our ebony friend in sight; all of us very glad to stretch our legs once more on land, and to think we hadn't any more sea travel worth mentioning to accomplish.

We did not forget to ask every imaginable question from Sambo on the way, who appeared delighted at the opportunity of exercising his inherent loquacity and talent for stretching the long-bow. Many stories he told of rich miners returning to Victoria from the upper country, bathing their feet in champagne, eating ten-dollar bills, and committing similar absurd extravagances; and our mercurial spirits were soon raised to the highest pitch by the narration—so much so, that I don't suppose any one of the party (except Sambo and the mule, of course) would have been a bit surprised to kick against a nugget in the macadamised road we were travelling.

After about two miles along a road generally closed in with trees on both sides, but occasionally affording a glimpse of the sea through some break in the thick woods, we came suddenly upon our first view of the harbour and town of Victoria, with quite an extensive prospect opening out in every direction; the whole forming a very charming picture in the clear air of a spring evening.

The town, then built almost entirely of wood, painted in many colours, stood on a slight rise, gently sloping down to the margin of the water, so that nearly every house could be plainly seen. For a short distance round the land was like a park, studded here and there with oak and patches of grey rock which cropped out from the green surface; whilst, at intervals, numerous residences peeped forth from secluded nooks in the uncleared woods forming the immediate background, or overlooked the prospect from some prominent point. High rocky hills, covered with the ever-present pine and fir, with the sun just setting behind them, and tinging them with many hues, shut in the scene from the land side; and to seaward, across the Gulf of Georgia, the chain of the Olympian mountains showed their snow-clad summits, lit up with pink and purple by the expiring rays, and their sides fading fast into the darkness of the coming night. In the harbour a few sailing-vessels and steamboats lay calmly at anchor, and a number of Indian canoes crept stealthily about,

under the paddles of their picturesque-looking occupants; whose mournful ditties, in time with the stroke of their paddles, could be heard from time to time, borne far on the still air. Opposite the town, and close to us, was the 'rancherie,' or village of the native tribe; its huge rambling huts, built of unhewn slabs of cedar, blackened by the weather, making a curious contrast with the dwellings of the intruding strangers; many of which, in the shape of tents, were to be seen close ahead of us, forming a little white village by themselves, whence the sound of merry voices occasionally reached us.

Everything was so calm and lovely, and was so suggestive of rest, that by a mutual instinct we all of us stayed gazing a long time at the place which was to form our head-quarters during our stay in that part of the world. It was like the sudden transformation scene in an extravaganza; we stood there dreamily contemplating it with pleasant anticipation, but still diffident of approaching it closer, lest the spell should be broken, and all the loveliness turn into blue lights and tinsel.

At length, however, my reverie was broken, and my quiet pipe disturbed, by a less imaginative fellow-traveller, whose digestive organs became excited by the scent of a beef-steak frizzling on one of the neighbouring camp-fires, and who declined any longer to feast his eyes at the expense of his stomach. So we marched onwards again, to be soon stopped once more by the hails

of the happy possessors of the beef-steak, who appeared to be some of a party of emigrants which had preceded us by a few weeks, and on the strength of their seniority in the country came down to the side of the road to scrutinise us and chaff the 'new chums,' with all the airs of professed back-woodsmen—although the yard measure appeared to be to many of them a more natural and becoming weapon than axe or shovel. After a little good-humoured *badinage* we proceeded, and crossing the bridge over the harbour, reached the town, where we finally pulled up at the doors of an hotel recommended by our baggage-driver, who was doubtless connected with the establishment in some vicarious manner.

I was not a little surprised, on asking in the conventional manner for a bed for the night, to be shown by the energetic proprietor (in his shirt-sleeves, ready for any emergency) into a billiard saloon, upon the floor of which he kindly pointed out a space about three feet wide, where I might, in company with forty or fifty others provided with similar accommodation, spread my own blankets, and sleep upon them, for a trifling fee of fifty cents.

I began rather to wish that I had provided myself with a tent at San Francisco, and joined our chaffy friends of the beef-steak in the camp at 'Canvas-town'; where at least I might have enjoyed my own blankets and a larger space for nothing. I remonstrated gently

with my host, who appeared somewhat flushed with the prospects of gain held out by the number of our party, but all the reply I could get was, that 'he reckoned any man that 'ud raise a growl on such an occashin was darned small pertaters: I might spread out on the side-walk, or turn in with an Injin, if I was a mind to, but his charge to a white man for nightly accommodashin was fifty cents, and niggers rigidly *ex*cluded.'

The originality of this man as a caterer to the public rather amused us, and I think induced us more than anything to submit to the inconvenience and the swindle. We took excursions to other houses, but found them all full, and were glad in the end to occupy our respective plots of six feet by three.

I went off to sleep tolerably early on my allotted portion of the floor, intending on the morrow to inspect and form my opinions of the place and its inhabitants, and to present some letters of introduction to the latter. The only drawback I found (I had been used to hunting out a soft plank on deck to sleep upon for some time past), was that a pair of gentry, who came in rather late, requested permission of the recumbent occupiers of the floor to play a game of billiards, as a bet of a hundred dollars depended upon it; promising, at the same time, to 'step clear and not disturb anybody.' This arrangement succeeded well enough for some time, till one of the players began to lose the game and his temper, and, heedless for the moment of

the position of affairs, brought down the butt-end of his cue on what he fondly imagined was the floor. It happened, however, to be the stomach of a burly young Englishman, who, having the bad taste not to see the joke, jumped up and struck the man with the cue a considerable blow in the eye, knocking him down on the top of a few more of us, including myself. This caused a great row, in which everybody hit out at everybody else; the lights were put out, somebody fired off a pistol, and amidst great confusion the two players somehow got hustled out into the street, there to settle anew, in some other place, their hundred-dollar bet.

I have had my doubts, on a further study of American character, whether that final *coup* of the cue-butt was not premeditated by the losing gentleman.

CHAPTER IV.

VANCOUVER'S ISLAND.

I do not purpose entering into a regular history and description in the guide-book style of this colony, or the sister one of British Columbia; but a few introductory remarks on the subject may give some impression of the kind of place our trans-Rocky-Mountain possessions are.

It is not more than fourteen years ago that the only civilised creatures (and not too highly civilised either) who encroached on the wilderness were the traders and employés of the Hudson's Bay Company. They had a few scattered forts about the country, which were the outposts of their fur-trading system; and they lived on friendly terms (often culminating in closer ties) with the members of the numerous Indian tribes who peopled the country. These forts have since been kept up, although with a different object to that originally contemplated; for some of them now form the centres of little towns, and are used as mere shops for the convenience of the whites, instead of depositories of furs and skins.

So little attraction does the territory possess from an

agricultural point of view, that in all probability its primitive aspect would not have been altered for a century or two, had it not been for the gold discoveries first made on the bars of the Fraser River in 1858. These caused a large influx of miners from California, who, with the native pioneering spirit of Americans, pushed their discoveries to a much greater extent, until the Cariboo district was found in 1861, in which year the first accounts reached England, and created an immense excitement, as the reader may perhaps remember.

A large number of these Americans have stayed in the country, so that, although a British colony, at least half of its population consists of persons who are not British subjects. The general cosmopolitan character of the people on the Pacific Coast is also well represented here; there being many French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, negroes, and numbers of almost every race that can be named in fact.

It is difficult to imagine any country of its size with so small a proportion of its area available for cultivation; rocks, pine-trees, and rushing torrents, are the staple constituents of its surface. The delta at the mouths of the rivers contain some rich land, but most of it is covered with heavy timber and thick brushwood, the labour and expense of clearing which are not to be lightly estimated. In the upper country there are a few valleys possessing lands of compara-

tively insignificant extent, and of a light, though fertile soil. Where irrigation is possible, these have been turned to good account; but when the virgin character of the soil is exhausted, as from its lightness it soon will be, the unfortunate farmer will hardly find another spot where any market for his produce can be obtained. The idea of manuring lands in that part of the world is placed entirely out of the question by the expense such a process would entail, rendering all hope of successful competition hopeless.

I am induced to state these facts from my own recollection of the descriptions given at home of the *fertility* of the country, and its enormous agricultural resources, by people of some authority who have visited England, and preached, written, and spouted on the subject; omitting, however, to mention the fact, that they were the owners of large tracts of ground, purchased for a mere song, which they desired to convert into 'Edens' by means of their grossly exaggerated statements, to use the mildest phrase possible. There was no one to dispute them in those early days.

The real wealth of the place is in its minerals, timber, and fisheries; and in any one of these respects it certainly offers no mean inducements to the capitalist who may be disposed to risk a chance of total loss for a large prospective gain.

To revert to myself. On waking in the morning I presented myself at the bar, and received the customary

'cocktail.' (Reader, this is a bad habit, though enticing; don't be seduced into it if you go to America.) Whilst engaged in discussing this compound, I was interviewed by the intelligent and enterprising 'items-man' of a local paper, whom the landlord introduced to me as anxious to gain the latest scraps of news respecting the old country. He appeared to be, like many others of his compatriots on the Pacific, of strong Southern sympathies; and pressed me strongly to disclose any state secrets I might possess concerning the intentions of 'Victori' and the leadin' politishins to home' with regard to the war then raging in the States. On finding, after much pumping in the most suspicious tone, that I was really innocent of all complicity in such affairs, he seemed to regard me as a harmless creature whom it behoved him to protect, and therefore kindly offered to show me everything in the place worth a visit—an offer which I gladly accepted after breakfast, although I found the gentleman's society a little irksome after a time on account of the numberless and varied drinks I was expected to imbibe. The average Victorian's sense of bliss apparently consists of the largest possible number of drinks in the shortest possible time, varied with cigars and billiards *ad lib.* The number of billiard-tables is simply astonishing to English eyes: there are at least eighty to a town of five or six thousand inhabitants, and they seem to be kept well going day and night.

We made an extensive tour of the various saloons and the principal stores, where we fell in and conversed with a good many returned miners; took a trip across the ferry to the Indian village (the strange features of savage life thus presented hardly recompensing one for the outrage on one's olfactories); had a peep at a huge pile of gold-dust just brought down by one of the lucky miners; and ended with a visit at the residence of the Governor, to whom one of my letters of introduction was addressed.

Letters of introduction! Reader, a little more advice; never carry them—at any rate to a colony with the expectation of their assisting your fortunes—unless you have good reason to believe that pipe-lights may be a valuable commodity at the place you are going to. After the first salutations had passed, the inevitable practical question came, 'Well, sir, what can I do for you?' I had some dim notion of the possibility of a snug government berth for a time, with nothing to do and plenty of pay, and hinted this misty idea in a subdued way to my friend the Governor. The only answer I got, or needed, was that gentleman's suddenly opening a huge drawer in his library, containing, I should fancy, a thousand or more 'letters of introduction.' This unhappy vision was supplemented by the advice—wholesome certainly, if unpleasant—that if I was hard up, the best thing that offered was to go up country and work on the roads. Taking a speedy leave of her

Majesty's representative, I resolved to chalk out a plan of operations with my companion from England at once.

When our projects came to be discussed, we found they did not hit together at all well. Mine were of a far more speculative nature than his, owing to my not having been seasoned by frequent disappointments as he had. He therefore proposed staying where he was for some time to come, and obtaining a livelihood without risking the vicissitudes of fortune at the mines. Nothing would satisfy me but an immediate plunge *in medias res*, and I deemed him rather faint-hearted for not sharing my own views. As, however, his determination was as fully formed as my own, further discussion was useless; and we parted, wishing one another success in our new missions.

My resolution got a little shaken on the following day by an excellent offer I received from a member of the legal profession, with whom I had struck up a casual acquaintance, and who advised me strongly not to go to the mines. 'A miner,' said he, 'is but the means of conveying money into other people's pockets: he is simply our agent, though he would'nt acknowledge that position. I can name to you a hundred miners who have made fortunes, and lost or spent them, for perhaps two who have been able to stick to them. We townspeople have nothing to do but sit on our beam-ends, and wait for these hard-working, de-

luded creatures to come and pour wealth into our laps!'

But the spirit of adventure was then too predominant to allow of the voice of reason being heard, and I stopped my ears to the words of wisdom. There is little doubt, that, had I followed the advice of this disciple of Blackstone, I might ere now have been too rich to have to work for a living; for, with a prescience worthy of his calling, this gentleman recommended me to invest my little capital of between two and three hundred pounds in the purchase of some town-lots fronting the harbour. I did go to examine these investments certainly, but found them to consist of a large mass of solid rock, not near any habitation, and not looking then as if they were calculated to form anything but an eyesore; notwithstanding, five years afterwards they were valued at ten thousand pounds, and were the site of the largest warehouses in the town.

The foolish excitement I was imbued with might well be pardoned on account of the immense number of persons who shared in it. Even hotel and store-keepers, and other sharks of all descriptions, were so crazed by the startling accounts of immediate wealth that reached us every day, that they threw up their sure and steady gains for the uncertain chances of the mines. The whole place was utterly wild, and it required a steady nerve indeed to withstand the temptations held forth by so many seductive stories.

Emigrants thronged the streets, buying broken-down mules and Indian ponies, and loading them with provisions and mining implements, packed in so ill a manner that one could well imagine how little skin would remain on the backs of the wretched quadrupeds when their journey was completed. The number of falls in the street sustained by inexperienced tyros in trying the qualities of their equine purchases was great, for Indian horses have an unpleasant habit of buck-jumping, hard to resist even in a Mexican saddle.

Many auctions were to be seen at street corners; the goods for sale consisting of articles utterly useless for up-country purposes to their possessors, such as dress suits, dressing cases, and other things of the kind, which had been crammed into the trunks of the emigrants under the idea that they were indispensable. One of the items I saw was an iron wash-stand, with fittings complete, which its owner had regarded with much complacency as 'just the thing for that country, you know,' until he found he should have to carry it on his back for three or four hundred miles, if he wished to avail himself of the prodigious facilities for open air ablutions *en route* which it offered. The prices realised were, of course, ridiculously small, as no one wanted such superfluities, and the money spent on them in the first instance would have been far better carried in the pockets of the luckless wights. The

only outfit a man who intends to rough it ought to carry, is a few rough strong clothes and woollen shirts.

Criers paraded the streets, shouting forth the hours of departure of various steamboats for New Westminster (the capital of British Columbia, and the next place on the way to the mines) and the fares; which latter, as there was considerable opposition, were very low. Parties of sober old miners, clad in blue or red shirts, with their 'pants' tucked into knee boots, their belts showing the usual jack-knife and revolver, their heads crowned with wide felt hats, and their backs laden with small well put-up packs, consisting of a pair of blankets, enclosing a spare shirt and pair of socks (with the addition, perhaps, but not in many cases, I expect, from the bearer's appearance, of a piece of soap), wended their way quietly to the wharves, and got on board the expectant steamers. Here and there, a green youth fresh from home was toiling along under a load of Heaven knows how many pounds weight (hundredweight I was going to say) of traps; the greater part of which he would probably relinquish at the end of the first day's tramp, a prey to the jackal instinct of some prowling denizen of the forest. Scattered over the town, groups of dirty and stolid Indians, in many-coloured blankets, with their squaws and little red-skins—none of the family at all representing Mr. J. Fenimore Cooper's ideal—watched the scene with the air of grand spectators, for whom it had been specially prepared; occasionally making remarks among

themselves in their own tongue upon the passers-by; doubtless, too, in unflattering criticism, judging by the sympathetic guffaws of the listeners. The whole place seemed to be in a most unwonted state of bustle and uproar; the only commensurate excitement I can think of, which might be seen at home, would be in a remote country village on its annual fair-day.

I didn't waste much time when my intentions were fixed, but proceeded straightway to purchase a couple of mules, and a load of provisions for each of them to carry, with a few tools superadded. I then joined my fortunes with one of my late shipmates, who made similar purchases, and we made our way on board one of the steamers for New Westminster; not without some resistance on the part of our mules though, who didn't seem to bargain for anything but *terra firma*. After persuading these creatures by numberless kicks that their conduct was indecorous, we got them safely berthed for the night, took off their loads, and gave them a heavy feed to put them in good temper for their trip next morning; while we returned to the town to take a final leave-taking of the friends we had left behind, and to sleep and dream of the unfailing nuggets that were waiting for us to a certainty, if for nobody else.

Next morning, at an early hour we started off, after a little adventure occurring. One of our fellow passengers, whose steps were rather unsteady from the

hospitality he had encountered, not finding the gangway quite wide enough for him, fell into the water, to the great consternation of everyone. As the poor fellow could not swim a stroke, and nobody seemed inclined to render him any assistance, I jumped in and dragged him to some steps close by, whence we endeavoured to transfer ourselves once more to the boat. For this purpose I lent my newly-acquired *protégé* my arm; but, on essaying the gangway again, the old impulse seemed to overtake him, he gave a sudden lurch, and again went over, dragging me with him before I could extricate myself from his grip. This time it wasn't so pleasant, for he held me tight; and I was beginning to lose presence of mind and swallow salt water pretty freely, when I took advantage of an opportune moment to hit my adversary, as I was now compelled to regard him, so violent a blow on the nose that he let go of me and sunk. A boat had by this time worked round to us, into which I clambered much exhausted, and the object of my solicitude was hauled in, as he reappeared on the surface, more dead than alive.

When the drunken passenger came to (his bath and a slight sleep soon sobered him), he certainly embarrassed me almost as much by the warmth of his thanks—the gentleman was of Milesian extraction—as he had previously inconvenienced me with the vigour of his watery embraces; and we laughed together over his swollen nose, which he protested he hoped would long

continue in that condition as a warning to him against strong drinks. I believe the 'bhoy' would have done anything for me after this; and indeed, when the occasion came, he did'nt fail to show his friendship.

After about ten hours steaming among the numerous islands of the Gulf of Georgia, constituting the most delightful scenery possible, we entered the Fraser River, and soon came in sight of the capital of British Columbia; a little bantling town, occupying a noble site in a fine stretch of the river. The town is frequently designated 'Stump-ville,' and one would certainly think a more appropriate name could not have been adopted. An immense forest of cedar and pine trees has been partially cleared away to give place to the straggling streets and occasional shanties which form the dignified capital; and, as if in mockery of their puny slayers, the blackened stumps of the huge trees stand forth in every direction, from the edge of the water to the unattached domains of the forest in the background, bidding defiance to man's efforts at destruction.

The prospect, however, was a pleasing one to us, for it gave a hope of relief from the swarm of mosquitoes that had been attacking us ever since we entered the river, and we gladly landed in the presence of every available man, woman, and child of the resident population, to whom the advent of a steamboat was the only break in the monotony of their existence, and the only hope of subsistence, gained by plunder of the passing travellers.

CHAPTER V.

UP THE COUNTRY.

It was not a matter of regret to us that we only had one night to spend in the capital, for the accommodation was more than indifferent, and the local attractions were small.

The town was in such an embryonic state that many of its streets leading up-hill were mere quarries, down which the unsuspecting stranger might fall a depth of from ten to twenty feet every now and then, supposing he had not broken a limb at the first tumble. The night was pitch dark, and no lights warned the wayfarer of his danger.

Being of an enquiring turn of mind, I wished to make a tour of the place; and having almost accomplished it, I was returning to my boarding-house close to the wharf, walking gaily along whistling an air, when suddenly—thud! I fell on all fours, from a height of about ten feet, upon a soft and writhing mass, which emitted many squeals and groans. Rubbing my shins, and stepping away a short distance, a lucifer match being suddenly lit and applied to a pitch-pine torch, I discovered by the light of it an Indian standing

in a menacing attitude with uplifted hatchet, while his wife and children stared and gesticulated wildly at the unwilling intruder of their slumbers.

As I did'nt know a word of the language in which the Indian challenged me, and couldn't therefore explain that the mistake arose entirely through his going to bed at so unnaturally early an hour, feeling moreover rather 'skeared' by his appearance, I drew my six-shooter: upon which he dropped his hatchet, and incontinently fled with the partner of his bosom and their olive branches (with a coppery tinge); leaving me master of the field. On examining the spot I found I had fallen upon the rude tent of the family, which had been pitched for the night under the shelter of the little declivity, and had of course carried it down with me on the top of the occupants of the connubial couch.

I limped away as best I could—for one of my shins had come across a tin kettle—and reached the boarding-house with my impressions of New Westminster about on a par with my temper. I found that our host was a town councillor, and proceeded to rate him soundly, in his administrative capacity, on the state of the thoroughfares; for which luxury I found, on comparing figures with my fellow guests, I was charged an extra dollar. It was wrong, but clearly the man had no discrimination—he could'nt separate his office from himself.

We were now to get on board a river steamer to go

as far as Fort Yale, about a hundred miles above, and the head of steamer navigation on the Fraser. I do not suppose such another river has ever been navigated by steamers at all, for at some places near Yale the stream is never less than twelve or fourteen miles an hour, and the whole course of the river is full of difficulties and dangers of every description.

The river steamers are all built with a view to overcome these difficulties as far as possible. Their hulls are almost flat-bottomed, and they only draw two feet of water or thereabouts. To make up for the deficiency in depth they are of great length and beam. Their bows are of the shape termed 'shovel-nosed,' and from this point they run away aft quite straight; very much resembling a section of a rifle-cartridge in fact. The propelling medium is a huge wheel at the stern, from eighteen to twenty-four feet in diameter, extending across the entire width of the boat. This wheel is not immersed to a greater depth than that of the paddles, (about eighteen inches) and is connected with the cylinders by means of cranks and connecting-rods. The boilers are well for'ard, close in the bows, and the furnaces are on a level with the main deck and quite open, to enable them to get all the draught caused by the motion of the vessel. The steam is conducted from the boilers to the cylinders in the engine-room (which is the farthest thing astern on the main deck) by long pipes, which make the place fearfully hot in the

summer-time. The rest of the space on this level is occupied by freight, and by Indians, Chinamen, and niggers, whom the free and independent American citizen refuses to have in his company on the upper or passenger deck.

Above the rectagonal part of the hull (the shovel-nosed bow being retained as an open space) is the saloon deck, generally fitted up in very good style, and being much the same as the similar part of an ordinary steamer. Sometimes yet another deck is added to this, while surmounting everything is the pilot house, placed at the for'ard extremity of the upper deck; the wheel working the rudders (of which there are four parallel to each other) by means of chains running in grooves along the hurricane-deck.

Of course the engines are of the high-pressure order; and when one embarks one naturally turns his attention to the boilers, for he may depend on their being well tried during the trip, especially if the water be at anything like a difficult stage—either too high, or too low.

We were fortunate in getting a passage on one of the best of these river craft; and, after another dispute with our mules, we got comfortably on board, and started in a regular pandemonium of excitement; the whole of the population again favouring us with their presence on the wharf, showering hopes and blessings upon us, and putting on their most affectionate behaviour, in the hope, I suppose, that we might spend a few of our

dollars there when we returned, instead of bolting off to Victoria, and spending all our substance during the ensuing winter season upon their dreaded rival.

The lines were cast off, the last stick of cord-wood piled up on the bows (with the double intent of being near the furnace, and of trimming our boat by the head), the last gangway shipped, the inevitable man left behind being close in sight, running for dear life, but too late, alas! and away we went, the furnace roaring, and the 'scape-pipe snorting like some monster with the croup. Soon little of us was to be seen from the wharf but the cloud of spray sent up by our wheel as we stemmed the river.

The first part of our journey was not particularly entertaining; as, owing to the denseness of the woods on the banks, we could gain no view of the country we were passing through; and we stopped nowhere, except to wood up, at occasional spots, where one or two wood-cutters, more than half savages (their better halves being generally whole savages) appeared, and carefully measured the quantity of wood supplied to satisfy the inordinate appetite of our 'fire-canoe,' as the Indians termed it.

One had a good opportunity during this time to take notes of one's neighbours, and the general company certainly presented strange features to untrained eyes.

Beginning with the crew, the captain was a wary old pilot, who knew every inch of the river, every tree

to tie up to, and every snag and rock in our course, and who, from long familiarity with danger, seemed to regard his arduous duties as lightly as the driver of a 'one hoss chay.' His was no easy time of it either, for in bad parts of the river he had to take the wheel himself for hours at a stretch. The mate was a burly ruffian, who exercised a strong arm and voice over the deck-hands, mostly made up of Indians, and who seemed to have less to do (except in the way of talking and swearing) than any other member of the crew. The engineer was apparently a runaway fireman from a man-of-war, who had been promoted to his present position *faute de mieux*; whilst his subordinates, who replenished continually the insatiable furnace, were, I should think, the veriest and hardest-working slaves in existence. The high-toned and elegant bar-keeper in snowy shirt sleeves, and of gentlemanly mien, was on board, of course.

All the passengers were bound for the mines in different capacities; three parts of them were *bonâ fide* miners in the roughest of attire; the remaining fourth were storekeepers and gamblers, and two members of the other sex; one of the latter a washerwoman, who afterwards made a large fortune I heard, and the other a courageous lady about to join her husband. Ladies bound for the upper country were rare birds, indeed, at that time, and as such were regarded with much wondering curiosity, and some amount of chivalric

respect by the miners, who, with the greatest self-denial, actually refrained from swearing within ear-shot, or squirting tobacco-juice within a yard of them. Even the homely laundress was raised by the scarcity of her sex into a goddess for the nonce.

When dinner was spread in the saloon, everybody made a simultaneous rush for places, knocking over on their way one or two nigger stewards bearing savoury dishes, and appearing to think that the first man there would certainly eat up everything and leave none for the rest.

I am sorry to say that even the ladies were forgotten at that time, and would hardly have got a mouthful had it not been for the captain; who, with a tact admirable on such an occasion, stretched himself at full length along the table opposite the best dishes, until the rest of the company were seated, thus reserving space enough for the dames and himself. But his constancy was ill requited by the washerwoman, who had paid two or three visits to the bar, and in a facetious mood, excited by the captain's peculiar situation, stuck a pin into the most readily yielding portion of his body, exclaiming, 'Git up, cap'n! 'Reckon we caan't eat you, nohow!'

When dinner was over—it didn't take long at the rate everyone gobbled—and the cloth was removed from the long table, it was soon occupied by the gamblers, professional and otherwise. Gold and notes

began to appear freely, and to change hands rapidly. Great piles of twenty-dollar pieces lay about the table in tempting confusion, and the clattering and chinking was incessant. As the players became warmed to their work the excitement increased, and shouts and oaths rang through the place. Everyone who, from want of inclination or money, did not play, looked on, almost equally interested with the players in the different games, of which 'poker' seemed to be the favourite. This game is founded on our English one of 'brag,' and affords great facilities for rash speculation, as well as for the light arts of the *chevaliers d'industrie*.

At one end of the board, where two of these gentlemen appeared to have a couple of foolish fellows in their clutches, a dispute soon arose, owing to one of the pigeons seeing his neighbour pick a card from his lap. A revolver and a knife were drawn in an instant, but luckily the adversaries were separated before any harm happened. A duel on shore was threatened; but as I didn't hear afterwards of any catastrophe, I suppose our friends thought better of it when their blood was cooled.

Night soon came on, and we ran the nose of our boat on shore, and tied up to a convenient tree, waiting for the moon to rise. My partner and myself looked about for a place to sleep, but found much difficulty in securing one. The saloon (the floor of which was generally used for such a purpose) was impracti-

cable on account of the row: we tried the freight on the deck below, and were coiling ourselves snugly on some sacks, when we were warned by one of the hands that if we valued our lives, and had matches in our pockets, we had better clear out, as there were half a dozen barrels of blasting-powder beneath us. We left. At length we made friends with the engineer, who afforded us a space in his *sanctum*, on the floor of which we gladly spread our blankets.

In an hour or so we were roused by the working of the engines, and found we were under weigh again. Our engineer at the same time requested us to find a fresh berth, as we were in the way. Despairing of sleep, we lit our pipes, and stumbled about till we got to the upper deck again.

Looking about us, we saw that the moon was shining brightly, and that we were once more ascending the river, although but slowly now, from the increased strength of the current. The aspect of the country was quite changed too; we were shut in on each side by grim mountains coming almost close down to the water's edge, while the river swept swiftly round their bases. Snags and rocks appeared here and there, breaking the smooth surface of the water into glancing ripples. On one side the moon threw its soft but brilliant light; on the other the mountains cast their huge shadows, hiding everything in the obscurity but the fast-expiring glow caused by the fire of some

Indian's camping-place. At a bend of the river, farther on, a line of troubled water danced in the moonlight, revealing the hidden shoals; and above all the stars glittered peacefully, reflecting themselves shiveringly in the cold waters beneath. Nothing disturbed the calm repose of the scene but the stertorous breathing of our fire-fed monster, as it assailed the swift running stream, ploughing its way sturdily against it, and the occasional echo of voices from the interior of the cabin, breaking harshly on the ear in the holy stillness of the night.

While enjoying all this, half asleep and wholly abstracted, a fresh sound arose. Getting up hastily, and running aft to ascertain the cause of this, I saw the sparks flying from the funnel of another steamer, and its fires throwing a ruddy glare on the waters it was rapidly displacing in its efforts to catch up to us. In order to effect this object it had followed the dangerous expedient of running in the dark, whilst we had been tied up safely to the bank.

Our ubiquitous captain appeared to have his observation attracted towards our rival at the same time as I did, and forthwith began to raise the still echoes by many loud expletives and commands to the crew, expressing all the time his determination to 'lick 'er or bust!' He accordingly liquor'd two or three times on the spot, and did not explode, except in words.

At once proceeding to business, he yelled out to the

wretched firemen, 'Say, below thar, you 'tarnal skunks, jes' you wire in, will yer!'

'Wire in yerself, old man, and don't stand thar blowin'. Ef you want us to whip that other boat, you'd better hire a few o' them loafers to help us; for we're kinder played out.'

Many oaths followed from the captain and the mate, who now showed up more than half asleep and less than half sober. The Indian wood-passers were set hard to work, by the aid of kicks and objurgations in the Chinook jargon; and the furnaces began to glare with ruddy fierceness, as the dampers were withdrawn from them, and the resinous firewood was heaped into their yawning mouths.

Our pace mended, but the opposition craft gained fast on us; so the fireman's advice was adopted, the captain shouting:—

'Five dollars a head, boys, for any of yer that'll take a turn at them fires!'

'Here y'are cap'n!' 'I'm thar old hoss!' 'That'll du, you bet!' and half a dozen aspirants crowded down into the narrow space before the furnaces, passing the heavy sticks of cordwood from one to the other as quick as light. The heat soon caused them to strip to the buff, while the black and rosin got smeared over them, and the streams of perspiration coursed down and streaked them like so many painted savages. That furnace scene might well have suggested a picture for Dante's Inferno.

Still our opponent crept closer, and our captain's determination grew stronger.

'Say, Gluson!' addressing the mate, 'whar's all that bakin and them hams stowed away? I see a lot come aboard, the brand was a Diamond O.'

'What, Opheimer's?'

'Yes. 'Guess Jews ain't got no right to hev pork. Pass it along to the firemen, sharp!'

'All right, cap.'

Several sacks of bacon were thrown into the flames, making them roar like a strong east wind. Up went the steam gauge till it showed 160 lbs. to the square inch, just forty more than was allowed by the Government certificate, framed and glazed in the cabin.

Here the engineer came forward and called the captain's attention to this fact. But our chief seemed past all reason in his violent state.

'Waal,' he said, 'if the gover'ment 'spector's aboard and feels skeared, tell him to git as fur away aaft as he ken, and save his British hide. The old boat's never bin whipped yet, and ain't goin' to be till she busts!'

By this time the other boat was neck and neck with us, and every available space on the deck of either boat was crowded by the passengers and others, bandying chaff with one another and entering into the general spirit of excitement prevailing.

Fate was not with us, however; for suddenly a fear-

ful shock and crash were felt and heard, and we stood stock still, with a snag run through the bottom of our hull; while the rival boat passed us with jeers, and without stopping to see whether we were sinking or not.

Luckily the snag was a sharp-pointed one. Its point had gone clear through our timbers, and, from the impetus with which we had run upon it, had penetrated for a length of about ten feet into the freight, killing an unfortunate horse belonging to our lady passenger.

The encumbrances were soon cleared away, and the snag sawn off. We then backed a yard or two, and the hole was immediately stuffed with blankets pressed for the service from the passengers. The water came in fast notwithstanding, for the shock had been so great as to start the seams in all the bottom planks.

Our boat was therefore headed for the nearest bank, and run hard on a shallow. We then removed ourselves and all our traps to the shore, and had to camp out there (without any covering but the trees) for a couple of days, when another steamer came up river and took us off. Our sojourn was not pleasant; for after a few hours it came on to rain, and continued to do so, with a pertinacity known only in mountainous countries, until we were relieved. Our poor mules didn't get much to eat, nor ourselves either, as we were only provisioned for the trip.

The gamblers carried on their avocation even here, and many a dripping spruce-tree sheltered its conclave of adorers at the shrine of the *monté* bank opened beneath its spreading boughs.

We got on all right on our fresh start, and after struggling against many bad places in the river, where all the steam that could be crowded on hardly made us move, we arrived at Fort Yale, from which point the rest of our journey (nearly four hundred miles) was to be on foot.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROAD.

Now came the commencement of our toils; our previous travelling had been a mere pleasure voyage, not giving us much chance to exercise our muscles or try our endurance.

The first step to be done was to pack the mules, and this is a task requiring more skill than would be imagined, if one does not wish to get stuck half-way on the road through the animals having bad backs. We had a good opportunity of learning how to accomplish the packing feat, as Fort Yale was alive with pack-trains starting with their loads for the mines.

At that time there existed no road, but only a rough trail wandering up and down the mountains and through the swamps, until it ended its straggling course at William's Creek, the centre of the mining district of Cariboo, which then held some eight or ten thousand men; and it may be judged that it took a tolerably continuous string of pack animals with their loads to supply the wants of the population.

Yale was a lively little place, and had a far greater appearance of business than the stump-ridden capital

we had lately quitted. The bar-rooms, with the never-absent billiard-tables, were as numerous as ever; and I noticed that the farther we travelled on so the quality of the liquor deteriorated, and the capacity of the people for swallowing it increased. So soon as a bargain was struck in one of the stores, its ratification in alcohol seemed to be necessary; and thus the day was passed by these happy merchants in making money and getting rid of it again as soon as possible. Profits were large though in those days, and doubtless the merchants made a better thing of it than their customers.

The professional packers are nearly all Mexicans, and a reckless bandit-looking race they are, working like slaves for a month to spend their earnings in a night or two's dissipation, the principal development of which is gambling at *monté*.

It was my cue to discover one of these gentlemen unemployed, and with his native cupidity aroused by the fact of his pockets being empty. Soon I found a swaggering specimen of his class, with huge sombrero hat, poncho, and silver-spangled leggings complete, who had just lost his last half-dollar at the *monté* table, and who condescended with all the airs of a *grand seigneur*, reduced by misfortune, to assist us for the first day, on receiving a trifling payment of five dollars.

The first thing our new acquisition did on seeing our pack-saddles was to shrug his shoulders and declare

they were no use, we must have proper *aparejos*, or we should never reach the mines. He went off, and returned in a short time with some of the saddles of his choice, huge leather wallet-shaped bags stuffed with hay. The additional expense was no trifle, but we had to grin and bear it.

Our provisions were soon dexterously made up into well-bound packs of about 150lbs. weight, one for each side of the mule's back. It was surprising to see the ease, occasioned by long practice, with which the regular packers threw up these weights on the backs of the animals, as if they were mere toys; while great strong tyros, who could have almost pocketed one of the little Mexicans, were struggling severely to accomplish the same feat, the perspiration rolling down their faces by the time they had succeeded two or three times; and owing to their inexperience of the habits of the 'critturs,' getting now and then a sly kick to aid their discomfiture.

The four mules that carried our cargo were soon equipped, and we went ahead along the up-country trail winding through the *cañons* or gorges of this part of the Fraser, which for about sixty miles above Yale runs through the midst of the Cascade Mountains. The Mexican was to accompany us for the first day, with a view to showing us how to tighten the loads when they got slack and unpack them at night, and also to manage our refractory slaves with the least trouble.

So we marched along for a dozen miles or so, stopping now and then to pick out a mule whose girth was slackening, and to start him on again with a shout after his fellows. At intervals we passed a roadside hut, where whisky (warranted to kill at forty paces) was dealt out to the unsuspecting applicant for refreshment, and occasional miners returning in ragged attire and mostly with woe-begone faces from the mines, where luck had failed them. Of course the stories related by these poor fellows differed materially from the newspaper accounts and glowing yarns of more successful individuals, and our exuberance had a good deal of cold water dashed over it by the time we reached Spuzzum Ferry, where we crossed the river in one of those ferries, common in Austria, which are worked by pullies running on a cable suspended across the stream.

I didn't much like the passage, for just below us there was a big fall in the river; and the strength of the current was such, that the strongly-built ferry-boat curled and warped like a sheet of paper held before the fire when we reached the centre.

A little farther on we met two men, one of whom was my Irish acquaintance whom I had picked out of the water. He was bestriding a venerable mule of malignant aspect, with an ugly habit of lashing out at anything that came near its hind quarters. I was glad to meet him, as he was a merry sort of fellow, and from a specimen I shortly afterwards had of his capacity

in the way of bulls, promised to furnish us with some amusement on the road. He was equally pleased to fall in with our party, and he and his companion agreed to travel on in company with us.

Two or three miles past the ferry we looked about for a favourable spot at which to camp for the night; and while thus engaged, Pat Keenan and I, with one of the laden mules, fell behind. Pat was twenty or thirty yards ahead of me, and I was urging on the lagging mule with gentle entreaties. Finding these unavailing I adopted a more violent expedient, and threw a stone at him. The stone (it was a good-sized one) missed my mule, but hit Pat in the back.

With many exclamations of rage he descended from his perch, and proceeded to lick the animal that bore him most unmercifully. Hardly able to keep from laughing aloud, I enquired—

'What's the matter, Pat?'

'Matther enough, bedad! Here's this ould black divil, not contínted wid thrying to opsit me iv'ry minit, has bin and kick't me square in the middle of the sphine!'

I didn't explain the truth of the matter to Pat, but quieted his wrath by telling him that no doubt the creature had performed in a circus, and that we would raise the wind out of him (if any were left by that time) when we got to Cariboo.

In another mile or two we came upon a place suited

to our requirements for the night : a green shady nook in a plateau on the side of the mountain, with a little stream tumbling off a ledge two hundred feet above us into a pool that intercepted its rapid flow towards the river. Wood and water, the two main requisites, being at hand, we at once proceeded to camp, our Mexican now leaving us to our own resources.

The loads were taken off the animals and piled in a row, with the *aparejos* placed in line in front ; and the mules, their leader carrying a bell, were turned out, after a feed of barley (as there was not sufficient grass feed for them in that inhospitable part of our route), to pick up what they could get. Each of the party then found some avocation, one pitched the tent, another kindled the fire, another cut wood enough to keep it going for the night ; and Pat, who had we found been a cook amongst other callings, was set to prepare our modest evening meal of bacon and bread, and to boil a kettle of beans ready for breakfast.

The gold-miners, and other wandering classes on the North Pacific coast, have an excellent and speedy method of baking bread, and the article produced is a long way ahead of the Australian 'damper,' and of most of our bakers' bread at home. Yeast powder is mixed in due proportion with the flour, which is then formed into dough. This is immediately divided into lumps large enough to cover the bottom of a frying-pan ; the frying-pan with its contents is then propped up in

front of a brisk fire. When one side is browned the cake is turned over, and the other side baked. Each loaf takes only about five or ten minutes to bake, or rather roast, and thus a sufficient supply for a large party can be prepared in less than an hour from the time the fire is lighted.

Exercise and the keen mountain air had given us all ravenous appetites, and our rough fare was devoured with more relish, I doubt not, than the most epicurean alderman has for a Guildhall banquet. The night closed in, pipes were lit, and a small store of grog found by somebody, under the soothing and genial influence of which the evening was pleasantly passed, until sleep overtook us, and we retired for the night into our blankets spread over the yielding and sweetly-scented branches of young fir-trees.

How true it is that expectation surpasses enjoyment! Those evenings, when after the fatigues of the day we rested round the camp fire, engaged in detailing reminiscences of the past, singing old well-remembered songs, or building castles in the air for our future residences; rude health dispelling all ugly phantoms, and giving zest to our little enjoyments, though nought but uncertainty was before us; how shall I always recall them as the happiest hours I have ever enjoyed! and who amongst us who may have realised his dream, would exchange the pleasures of his fancy for those of his fate?

With break of day we were up and stirring; Pat pursuing the task for which he had been selected, while the rest of us hunted up the mules, took down the tent, and got everything ready for a start.

We travelled on comfortably enough, with the usual drawbacks of mosquitoes and sand-flies, for some miles, ascending and descending at intervals the sides of the hills as we followed the river, until it came on to rain heavily. The rain rendered matters very disagreeable, the steep paths became sticky and almost dangerous in many places, and there was nothing to do save to plod on till we reached our stopping-place. Down it came, heavily and more heavily, till we were soaked through. The sky looked as if the rain never would cease; and Pat, as a man who had travelled that country before, was appealed to as to the chances of an improvement in the elements.

'Be jabers thin,' said he, 'I belave the great univarsal Deluge arose in these parts, it rains that hard here when it manes it! It's m'ist skins we'll be likely to have for a few days.'

'But do you mean to say it can go on like this for long?'

'Well, sure I've seen it rain abote here fur a week, in dhrops as big as a shillin'—yis, an' *from that to eightinpince!*'

After a time we found ourselves at the summit of an enormous bluff, called the 'Nicaragua Slide,' which we

had to descend until we reached the river bank about a thousand feet beneath.

The face of this hill was almost perpendicular, and appeared at first sight impossible for even a chamois to climb; but on a closer inspection we saw a narrow trail cut in a zig-zag of many turns till it reached the bottom, and turned off sharply out of sight round the base of the mountain. The height was so giddy that one hardly cared about looking beneath, but we had to go on, so the hill mule (which was unhappily mine) was started, and the rest of the train with ourselves in the rear followed.

About halfway down I heard the tinkling of another bell, and the shouts of men ascending with a returning pack train. At each turn of the zigzag a little space had been quarried into the hill side, to allow anything passing room to turn round before commencing a fresh descent. In one of these 'turn-tables' we drew up all the animals, except the bell-mule, who was too far ahead, to wait until the party had passed; the bell-mule, an experienced animal, we expected would take care of himself at the next turn-table.

Unhappily, our confidence was ill founded; the unlucky creature pursued his way downwards until he met the leading animal of the ascending train, who, with a sagacity much to be commended, stuck closely to the wall, leaving my wretched beast to go outside him. It was impossible, from the width of their packs,

for the two mules to pass each other at this point ; but mine, unable to stop himself from the steepness of the path he was descending, and the impetus given him by his load, endeavoured to pass on the outside : the two packs caught, poor *mulo* lost his footing, and with a scream fell over the precipice, and after a bound or two plunged a shapeless mass into the foaming torrent below.

The loss was a serious one, but luckily the first bound had lightened the poor creature of part of his cargo, which we picked up lower down with some difficulty and risk, and divided amongst the other mules. This mishap represented the loss of nearly half my capital : so at an early stage I got my first little lesson in practising the fortitude necessary to an adventurer.

We kept on our way up the course of the Fraser River, skirting the sides of the mountains that shut it in as closely for a distance of some sixty miles above Yale as if they had been reft abruptly in twain, only to leave passage for the mighty rushing stream at their feet.

The scenery, of course, was of the grandest ; many of the mountains rising to a height of from eight to ten thousand feet, and most of them being of a rugged and inaccessible type, with perpetual snows on their summits ; but we missed the signs of life requisite to complete the picture by relieving it of monotony. No habitations greeted the eye, save, at intervals of

five or ten miles along the trail, the log-hut of some patient individual, who tried to eke out a subsistence by selling liquid poison to the unhappy wayfarer, or injuring the digestion of the latter by a 'square meal' of ill-cooked food of the roughest kind at an extravagant price. Even these scattered emblems of human existence were not to be seen till we came close upon them, from their being so surrounded by the perpetual pine forest; and, from a bird's-eye point of view, the whole scene appeared as though never hitherto trodden by the foot of man.

One pleasant feature of journeying through the mountains is the never-failing supply of cool, delicious water, which comes tumbling down every here and there in a series of little rills, now and then varied by a magnificent waterfall, as some stream of greater pretensions leaves its bed of snow to swell the torrent far beneath; and thus the extra toil of the mountaineer is recompensed with the invigorating draught too often refused to the traverser of the plains.

Occasionally we met a procession of Indians, neglecting their wonted occupations to gain the dollars of the white man, by making themselves beasts of burden. In the ordinary fashion of savages, the wretched squaws had all the worst of it, each one usually carrying on her back a load of two sacks of flour—sometimes even three—weighing fifty pounds per sack, with often a baby perched on the top of the load; while her lord

and master walked calmly in front of her with a single sack upon his lazy shoulders.

I forgot to include John Chinaman amongst the inhabitants of this region; but the Chinamen form the largest section of the dwellers here. This much-enduring and industrious race are generally to be found in little clusters, at work upon the diggings deserted by the whites; and sometimes one meets a string of them migrating in search of a fresh field of enterprise, with all their worldly belongings in a pair of baskets suspended from either end of a pole carried across their shoulders. This mode of carrying is peculiar to the Chinaman, and he is so strongly conservative that he never adopts any other method. I once remember seeing one of these worthy people packing a quarter of beef; as he could not split this in two, so as to balance it on his pole, he adopted the following ingenious expedient. He cut a much longer pole (about twelve feet long) from a young fir-tree, tied the beef to one end of it, and a stone of about thirty pounds weight at the other; the end with the beef attached to it he kept near his shoulder, while the other end with the stone on it projected far in front of him, and thus balanced the heavier load next him; but John's ingenuity seemed rather heavily handicapped with a thirty pound penalty.

The patient industry of the race cannot, however, be too highly commended; they will work diggings that a white man will not look at — thus preventing a

vast amount of waste—and will, doubtless, at the end of the year, by means of their frugality, save more than their white brother is likely to, in spite of his higher gains.

When they have accumulated a little money, their ambition is usually to set up a laundry business (for they almost entirely usurp that useful trade in California and the other gold countries in the North Pacific) or a store; and there are some Chinese firms in San Francisco whose trade far exceeds that of any American or European houses, and whose names are indeed more widely known and more highly respected. Owing to the scarcity of females, too, a great many Chinese find employment in the towns as domestic servants.

It is the fashion on the Pacific Coast to abuse and ill-treat the Chinaman in every possible way; and I really must tell my friends the Americans that in this respect they show an illiberal spirit utterly unworthy of them. The Chinese are really, as citizens, most desirable members of a community; they are hard-working, sober, and law-abiding—three scarce qualities among people in their station. Prior to the abolition of slavery, the colour of his skin was the avowed objection against the Celestial, and special ordinances were even passed to render his evidence unavailing against a white in a criminal court. Since the conclusion of the War of Secession, this objection to colour has been recognised as illogical, and therefore other outcries

have arisen—he works too cheaply, so the great Irish element is in arms against the competitor who threatens to disturb its vested right of one day's work and two days' drunk for one day's pay. Which system of labour benefits society most all open-minded persons may judge.

Poor John! he is treated like a dog, bullied, scoffed at, kicked, and cuffed about on all occasions, his very name made a slang term of reproach; and yet, withal, he betrays no sign of meditated revenge, but pursues his labours calmly, and is civil and polite to all. He is close-fisted in his dealings with the whites, as he well may be, considering his treatment, and I really think the balance of honesty is in his favour. Even in the matter of religion, a score on which Americans claim to have particularly tolerant views, he is insulted to a pitch that would not be endured by a person of any other nationality.

A friend once told me that while in San Francisco he walked through the Chinese quarter with an acquaintance, who knew one or two of their merchants. Perambulating these curious and unsavoury streets, they came upon an edifice which they were informed was the 'Josh House,' the place of worship pertaining to the Celestials.

On entering the building they saw some few devotionalists, and a good many others whose occupation was not strictly devotional from a stranger's point of

view, for they were gambling. (I confess I don't think John's religious ideas are very deep, but perhaps gambling is part of his religion; if so, it is no wonder he tries to get rich, for all well-to-do Chinamen are terrible gamblers.) A good many hideous idols were perched round, and the visitors asked their guide who was the divinity represented by the most repulsive of these emblems.

'Josh,' he replied.

'Oh, Josh, of course! but then they're all Josh. Now, what particular Josh is this? Is he a Henry Josh, or a William Josh, or a Hiram Ebenezer Josh? Ain't he got no other name?'

John paused awhile; then a dim light broke over his swarthy countenance as a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

'Amelikan man call him "Sonny-pitch." Call all China man "sonny-pitch!"'

The visitors left abashed.

To resume our progress. In a couple more days, without any incident to mark them, we reached the Thompson River, up which our course lay for some distance. At the confluence of the two streams, and at the head of the cañon, is another little town called Lytton, with the usual up-country population of storekeepers and Indians. Here we found snugger quarters than usual for the night; and at this point, with the reader's permission, I propose to make a little digression on the subject of Indians in general.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NORTH NATIONS.

There is probably no race in the world whose antecedents have created so much speculation as the aborigines of North America; and though many ingenious theories have been mooted, yet it has always been a puzzle to the professors of ethnology to fathom their history, and it is little to be wondered at that science is at fault in the case. Of records there are none, and even the traditions of the various tribes seem to extend no further back than the last war with their neighbours.

But there are many distinctive features connected with the different races, which would seem to me, in the light of a mere practical looker-on, to show at least two entirely distinct origins from which this people, generally supposed to be of a common stock, might have sprung.

The Indians on the coast of Russian America, or Alaska now-a-days, and thence southward to the north coast of Vancouver's Island, are generally a fine race, the men being stout-set fellows, admirably developed in the bodies and arms, but somewhat poor in the lower

extremities. Their life is mostly spent in canoes, and salmon forms their principal food. Their complexions are hardly darker than those of the inhabitants of Southern Europe, while, amongst the females, I have seen as pure pink and white complexions as any English brunette might boast. The features are of a decidedly Mongolian type, and the peculiar oblique set of the eyes belonging to the Chinese and Japanese is frequently met with in the squaws.

These Indians, and particularly a tribe called the Hydahs, are wonderfully clever at carving in wood or stone, if any model be given them to imitate, and they can work soft metals with singular skill considering the rude tools they are forced to employ. I have seen many a beautifully-engraved bracelet or ring turned out of a twenty or ten-dollar piece by them. The language of the Hydahs, in its general sound and intonation, a good deal resembles Chinese, but is more guttural.

From the north of Vancouver's Island, still keeping the coast-line till California is reached, the Flathead Indians are the resident aborigines. These are of similar characteristics, in most respects, to their northern neighbours, save that their stature is less and their mental capacity proportionably diminished. The latter fact may doubtless be attributed to the absurd custom from which their name of 'Flatheads' is derived. Soon after an infant is born its head is tightly

bandaged between two flat pieces of wood, one placed on the forehead and the other at the back of the head, and this bandage is kept on night and day until the child is about two years old, by which time the head has acquired the shape which it afterwards retains.

But when one strikes inland to any distance, one encounters a race which seems to be utterly different in all respects to the natives already spoken of.

I was agreeably surprised, on reaching the Thompson River, to find an immense improvement in the *physique* of the Indians. They were tall, straight, slim fellows, with the orthodox copper-coloured complexion of the Red Indian, and with high features, often finely cut—in fact, one might properly call them Caucasian features—no more resembling the Flatheads, whose country I had just left, than an Englishman does a Negro. Their pursuits are as widely removed from those of the coast natives as their appearance is at variance with theirs; for these are hunters, and the horse and the bow and arrow take the place of the canoe and the fish-spear. The imitative faculty is entirely lost here, and the tongue which is spoken has a soft and liquid sound instead of being replete with the ear-piercing gutturals common along the coast. This type of men extends, with but little variation, across the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic.

From these crude premises it might perhaps be not rashly argued, that the race of Indians first described

are of Mongolian origin ; and the proximity to Northern Asia of the country inhabited by the tribes (as the Hydahs) whose peculiar traits, physical and otherwise, most closely approach the Chinese model, and who, from the fact of their not having wandered so far as the rest of their brethren, may perhaps be considered more likely to preserve those traits intact, would appear to strengthen this conclusion ; while the inhabitants of the interior, and thence eastwards to the Atlantic, having nothing whatever in common with the others (except the all-pervading characteristic of filth, of course), might be pretty safely set down as having a derivation perfectly distinct.

There is, of course, against this the common argument of different climates, pursuits, and food ; but in opposition to this argument may be set the fact, that the Indians on the Atlantic coast (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, for instance) closely resemble those two thousand miles in the interior ; while the Hydahs are utterly dissimilar to the Thompson River Indians a couple of hundred miles inland from them ; and this line of demarcation extends as far south as Lower California, where the distinction is lost, and another race, to be hereafter spoken of, appears to take the place of both.

My own idea then is, that the natives from the Atlantic to this line of demarcation were originally European, and that the two separate peoples have overrun North America from different directions.

I said there were no traditions amongst the tribes, but there is, or was, an exception to this rule. Some fifty years ago there lived near the banks of the Mississippi a tribe called the Mandans, who appeared to be of superior intelligence to their surrounding neighbours, who built their lodges differently, and possessed habits and customs of a nature far more civilised than the others. They composed altogether but a small tribe, and seldom married out of its pale. This little nation, it is asserted, had a tradition of its founders having crossed a big salt-water lake, and having travelled on until they took possession of the tract of land they then claimed as their hunting-ground. It is also asserted that the language they spoke was very like Welsh.

There is certainly a story current in North Wales of one of its princes having sailed with a few of his followers for Iceland, and of his sailing off again westward from thence. Of course, the connection between the two traditions is vague in the extreme, but it is within the bare bounds of possibility that the Mandans were descendants of this Welsh prince and his people.

With the encroaching flow of civilisation, this tribe, like its fellows, was driven farther westward; and at this time only a few scattered members remain, some in Arozina, and others, I believe, in Colorado. Hardly any traces of their superior civilisation now exist, the

hardships they have had to encounter in their forced pilgrimage having doubtless effaced these.

I met once in San Francisco one of the United States' soldiers, a man of Welsh parentage, who, whilst narrating some fights his detachment had recently had with the Apaches, told me that on his last expedition he had come across a small encampment of Indians belonging to a tribe he was unacquainted with, and inclined to be friendly. This man averred that the language spoken by these natives was so like Welsh that he could understand many words of it. He found amongst them a half-breed, who told him that the people were one of the few remaining portions of a tribe who had come, during the remembrance of the old men, from the neighbourhood of the Mississippi, and that they were called Mandans.

This story called to my recollection many things I had heard and read concerning this people, and confirmed my own impressions on the subject so strongly that I enquired of my informant whether he had ever heard anything concerning the history of the tribe; but he stated that he had not.

Assuming, for purposes of argument, the fact that this particular tribe is of European origin, a similar derivation is easily assigned to the whole of their brethren east of the line of demarcation I have already noticed; for there are no strong points of difference between them, and those that there are may be

reconciled by the hypothesis of the Mandans having emigrated later, or having, by reason of their exclusiveness, retained many features of a former mode of life, which the others have lost.

I said that on reaching Lower California the members of what might well be another entire race appeared. These are the descendants of the Aztecs of Mexico, now unhappily mixed up with Spaniards and negroes into a wretched set of mongrels. But it is of the Aztecs themselves, and of their cousins the Incas of Peru, whose languages were alike, and who traded and associated with each other, that I would now speak. Who could these people, with the high civilisation they possessed at the time of Pizarro and Cortes, have been? Clearly there could have been no connection between them and the wretched savages who lived to the northwards of them. Who and what were the people who worshipped the sun, and built those grand cities and noble temples, the ruins of which meet the eye in various parts of Mexico and Central America? There is only one tribe of aborigines now extant in America who at all resemble physically the description handed down to us of the Aztecs; this tribe is the Cherokees, who are now nearly all within the pale of civilisation, and many of whom, in Texas and other places in the Southern States, are members of professions, and are otherwise identified with the ordinary community.

The Cherokees are a fine, handsome race, of a con-

siderably different type from the Northern Indians, with more roundness of form and softness of feature, and certainly with much more advanced traits of mind. It is said (with what amount of truth I cannot tell) that freemasonry was in vogue amongst them when they were first encountered by the settlers. On the whole it is not unlikely that they are the only direct descendants of the former inhabitants of Mexico. I have not heard whether they had any particular form of religion; at the present time they are all, I believe, proselytes of Christianity.

So far as derivation is concerned, India would appear to contain the only people at all resembling the Aztecs and Incas in physical appearance, form of religion, mode of architecture, and proficiency in other arts; and the broad Pacific, with its resting-places in the shape of islands, was doubtless the highway that bore this noble race, of whom no one can read without feeling a deep and regretting interest from the rising to the setting sun.

There have been found on the banks of Lake Superior, near the mines of native copper which exist there, several *tumuli*, containing relics of some race of much more advanced knowledge and civilisation than the nomadic tribes who overrun that part of America; and a line of these *tumuli*, extending to Mexico and Central America, and containing exactly similar relics, has, I understand, been traced.

These mines, on Lake Superior, are the only place at present known where native copper is obtainable; and most likely the Aztecs, or some earlier race than they, not acquainted with any method of releasing copper by smelting from its ordinary chemical combinations, set a priceless value on this depôt of pure copper, and formed a line of forts to it from their own country. Each of these *tumuli*, it is not unlikely, marks the site of a fort.

The relics found are evidently of very great age, and there are many circumstances which tend to prove that the Western hemisphere has been inhabited for a much longer period than is generally credited.

Since I first wrote this book, I have by an accident come across an extract from a work by Mr. Cronise on 'The Resources of California,' in a San Francisco paper. That gentleman follows the notion that the Tartars, whose dynasty now rules China, discovered America by the errantry of a part of the fleet of Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, when Kublai attempted the conquest of Japan. 'A great storm drove many sail off to the coast of Alaska, to Peru, and to Mexico,' he says—rather diverse directions these, unless the storm was a whirlwind—'and among the badges of the Incas, and in the languages of Peruvians and Mexicans indifferently, are many things identical with the Chinese. A full suit of Tartar armour of the thirteenth century is said to have been among the spoil of Cortes in Mexico.'

But such a derivation as this is clearly too recent a one to be assigned to the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru. It was no colony of less than three hundred years old that Cortes found on his landing, but an old established kingdom, every feature of which pointed to its age. The scattered ruins now to be seen have at least as ancient an appearance as those of Rome; while I have never heard of any similarity to Chinese architecture about them. Asiatic in character they doubtless are; as are the shields and arms, and various other remains of workmanship in metal. One would think it doubtful whether there are any means of fixing dates to Tartar armour of anything like early times, even if the story of the finding be acceptable. It is quite likely that the armour worn in the thirteenth century by that unprogressive Mongol race was also worn by it for a thousand years or two previous to the epoch in question; and that very suit *might* have been a trophy earned by some warrior of Hindostan in fight against the Tartars, with whom the inhabitants of Northern India have waged almost eternal warfare.

Still it is just as possible that some of Kublai Khan's followers did get thrown on the coast of Mexico, and that a suit of armour belonging to one of them was found by Cortes. The only improbability seems to be that they should have been the ancestors of the North Pacific aborigines. There is no reason why they should not have found the country inhabited when they

reached it. There is not, indeed, I believe, any known reason to set against the idea that the Chinese may have been in regular communication with Mexico a few centuries since. Chinese literature and traditions are to us an unexplored maze, and it would be interesting to know if there are any traces in them of a knowledge of that great western land, not so very far removed from the northern parts of their own country.

This chapter I feel sure requires many apologies, and with such I hasten to close it. If I have trotted out what is certainly a hobby with me to the extent of wearying my readers, I beg their forgiveness: and can only solace myself with the hope that some mind better directed than my own may find a hint or suggestion that may help, if never so slightly, to open a train of enquiry into a subject of great and romantic interest to myself and many others.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROAD AGAIN.

Of all the dismal and dreary-looking places in the world, the valley of the Thompson River, for some fifteen or twenty miles from its mouth, would easily take the palm. We had thought the *cañons* of the Fraser rugged enough; but here was nought but rocks, whereon even the hardy fir refused to vegetate. Our 'bogey' friend, Gustave Doré, might have found here an opening for fresh fancies; and I often thought, while passing through it, of the Valley of the Shadow of Death in 'Pilgrim's Progress.'

We gladly pushed on through this wilderness to Cook's Ferry; where we crossed the river, and ascended its northern bank through a more open country, with plenty of grass at intervals, till we reached a little stream called the Buonaparte River.

The banks of this river are low and swampy; and the mosquitoes, from whose torments we had been partially relieved in the mountains, abounded to an unpleasant extent; and we poor green youths, from knowing no better, soon scratched and tore ourselves into a perfect frenzy. Most of our fists soon resembled

boxing-gloves in shape (I was going to say in size too, but that might be a little extravagant), and our faces took the appearance of well-boiled oranges smeared over with beet-root.

We stopped, on our third night from Lytton, at the wayside house of an old Scotchman, who had served the Hudson's Bay Company, and whose strapping half-breed sons came forth from the paternal roof-tree to welcome us to its shelter. We passed a merry evening with the old man, who told us many stirring stories of his former wild life; and as the aperture that served for a window was covered by a mosquito-bar, we lay down in our blankets on the earthen floor in the hope of a comfortable sleep.

In this, however, we were disappointed sadly; for our Hibernian, who had, alas! forgotten his vows, paid so much attention to our host's whiskey (strictly of the high-pressure stamp), that he must needs taste the sweetness of the midnight air, and lave his heated brows in the stream close by. The wretch on his exit left the door open upon his sleeping comrades, and in trooped the mosquitoes, in such numbers as only a man who has visited that part of the world will believe. Of course there was little sleep after this, and we got up in the morning unrefreshed, with a long day's tramp before us. We got even on Pat by taking an early start, and leaving him a twenty-mile march in the heat of the sun to catch us up.

Two or three days after this we reached a table-land, some four thousand feet high, where all the water was strongly impregnated with alkali; and here we had the greatest trouble with our animals, who often strayed six or seven miles away at night in search of sweet water. This was good training for us from the hunter's point of view, and we soon became almost as 'cute as Indians in tracking the paths of our wandering quadrupeds.

We were joined one night by a drover bringing in some five hundred head of cattle and some sheep from Oregon; and our ordinary fare of rusty bacon was exchanged for a dainty feed of fresh beef-steaks.

The drover was a particularly entertaining acquaintance, and turned out to be a member of the Oregon Legislature. I believe he might, with much labour, have been able to write his name; but in these new places, the strong arm often goes farther than the long head; and, as he certainly possessed the former, it is presumable that his constituents were better able to appreciate that quality than the latter one.

The man was a magnificent physical specimen of the Western settler. He stood some six feet four in his stockings, with a back and shoulders like a wall; straight as an Indian, with an open, fearless countenance, tanned by constant exposure to a deep brown tint; and with a resolute eye, before which, no doubt, many a horse-thief and marauder had quailed. As an instance of his strength, I well remember seeing him

once, while going at full gallop, stretch down from the saddle, and lift with one arm, from the ground on to the horse's shoulders, a large heavy sheep, of about the size of one of our Leicesters. Withal he was a merry, good-tempered fellow, without the least tendency to exert his enormous power for any but a worthy purpose.

The morning after our meeting I went out at sunrise to get our mules together, and found them, with the exception of two, at the place I expected. While looking about for traces of the missing two, I met with one of the hands in the drover's train. He appeared rather dismayed, and when I asked him the reason, said that forty head of their cattle were missing, and that he feared there were thieves about. We looked all round for a short time longer without finding any clue, and then returned as hard as we could to the camp.

When arrived, we found Pete, the drover, with one of his Mexicans, scouring the neighbourhood with anxious glances, apparently in search of tracks of some kind; while the herd of cattle rushed about, bellowing and snorting, and with difficulty kept within bounds by the remainder of the party. On Pete seeing his man return without the lost portion of the herd, and hearing that two of our mules were also gone, his suspicion was at once turned into conviction; and he exclaimed, 'Now then, boys, guess we'll hev to hunt down them 'tarnal skunks right away; who'll come along?'

We all offered to go at once, but as there were not horses enough, and we were bound to leave some people behind to look after what had not been stolen, Pete, Pat Keenan, a Mexican, and myself, formed the expedition. Pete had his long heavy rifle, carried across his saddle-bows, while the rest of us carried six-shooters; and we were all well mounted, for Pete had some first-rate horses.

The difficulty now was to find out which way the thieves had driven off our cattle, and a little council of war was held before starting. In the first place, of course they would never take the trail, but would seek some mode of getting across the range of mountains between us and the Thompson River; and, by swimming the river, reach the open country lying beyond it and towards the Columbia for about three hundred miles. If the river were crossed it would be but lost time to pursue them farther, as there were a dozen routes they might take over the plains. Expedition was therefore the first object, and yet it would never do to risk all by rushing to a hasty conclusion.

At this juncture the Mexican (whose previous history we were unacquainted with, and who very likely had given up the charms of a predatory life for an honest existence) turned up a trump.

Leading us to a little hill about a mile away, which seemed to have been placed by some freak of nature in the position it occupied, as it formed a singular break

in the otherwise even surface of the plateau, our guide, who was called Juan, asked us to ascend it. This we did on foot with a good deal of difficulty, for the hill was very steep, and composed of a curious kind of greasy decomposed trap-rock.

On reaching the summit I could not help exclaiming with admiration on the magnificence of the picture spread beneath and around. To the eastwards wound a long and wide valley, on the other side of which were the mountains which hid the North Fork of the Thompson River from us; and between them and us, in some part of the valley, we knew that our enemies were pursuing their way towards one of the openings in the range. Of these there appeared to be three, one of considerable magnitude some distance to the north of us; the other two were almost directly opposite and close together, but of smaller dimensions, and apparently more impracticable than the first one. In the far distance through these openings could be seen the snowy craggy summits of the Rocky Mountains. They could not have been less than from two to three hundred miles away; but in the marvellously clear atmosphere that exists in that part of America the distance did not look more than a quarter of what it really was.

Behind us was a perfect chaos of mountain peaks trending away in all shapes and sizes to the verge of the horizon, where they gradually became indistin-

guishable from the light floating clouds that hovered about them.

I was soon made aware that it was no time for sentiment; for Pete grabbed my arm, with a clutch like a vice, and remarked, 'Naow then, younker, quit stargazin', and 'tend to bisness; le'ss see what this yer greaser (the euphonious slang for Mexican) has got to say.'

Juan looked up and down the valley beneath, and appeared to be taking general stock of the country. In a short time he seemed to make up his mind, and approached Pete, pointing with his finger to the two breaks in the chain opposite us.

'Horse-tief go dere, Pedro.'

'Waal now, I calc'lated they was gone up the valley and through *that* pass,' alluding to the widest gorge to the northwards, 'whar they'd find easy travellin' all the way.'

'Horse-tief don't want easy travel, want get away quick. Tink I find 'em pretty soon.'

A means of reaching the foot of the two passes had then to be found, and in this our elevated position assisted us. Not far away we saw a little lake, now nearly dry, with its white banks, covered with alkali, glistening in the sun. From this, when the snows melted in the spring, causing it to overflow, a stream took its course, after many windings through a thick forest of stunted firs, towards the valley.

We descended from our point of observation, remounted our horses, and headed for this watercourse at once; and after struggling over fallen timber for two or three miles, we reached it and found it quite dry, with its bed covered with large rocks and boulders. Through these we had to pick our way with caution, and yet to make as much speed as possible; nothing but our Mexican saddles saving us from many a spill, as the horses stumbled and bounded over the uneven ground.

Little was said on the way; we all felt too much rage in our hearts, for in the Far West next to a murderer a cattle-stealer is regarded as the worst of his species—the two professions being, moreover, generally pretty closely associated.

Only Pat now and then broke the silence with a curse, as some fresh obstacle impeded his progress towards the objects of our search.

We had found it impossible to track the fugitive party, by the usual signs, from anywhere in the immediate vicinity of the camp, as the whole band of cattle had wandered about greatly in the night in search of water, and the confusion of hoof-marks was such as to render a search in that manner fruitless. We could only hope to come across any reliable traces when we reached the limit of the animals' wanderings over night.

After continuing for about three or four miles down the watercourse it became evident that the thieves had

not travelled over our path; for though we had met with occasional traces of cattle they were only at scattered intervals, and had no continuous appearance.

We began to think Juan had misled us, and Pete had just hinted to me that he thought it likely that Juan was 'in with them tarnation scoundrels,' when we arrived at a little stream which emptied itself into the bed of the dried-up river we had been following, filling it to the depth of a foot or two; a little farther on the stream forked, and we chose the broader and more open branch.

Juan declared his intention of following the other fork for a short distance and then rejoining the party. I went with him.

We splashed on through the water for a few minutes; the bottom was very soft and sandy, and I was surprised to find that the body of water gradually decreased instead of becoming larger, until finally the bed again became quite dry. It was plain that this part of the stream was at this season absorbed by the light nature of the soil.

I was now placing little faith in our hopes of catching the marauding party, and was looking straight ahead of me with the thought of striking off soon to catch up Pete and my Irishman; but I had observed Juan looking out very carefully still, and just as the hitherto flowing stream became changed into *terra firma*, he broke the silence with a sudden exclamation.

'Ah! dam artful rascal; I catch him now; 'E tink we go oder way, and come trou' de *agua* to cache* 'im feet.'

We scampered across the intervening ground and soon came upon our leader and Pat, both looking very disconsolate at finding no signs as they went on.

Pete was electrified by the intelligence we brought, and dashed on at a rate hard to keep up with; we felt secure of our prize, once on the right track, as it was impossible the cattle could be driven as fast as we pursued them. Pete asked Juan if he had any suspicion of who was the head of the thieving expedition. Juan replied that he thought it was 'Slippery Jack,' the most renowned member of the fraternity, and also one of the most desperate villains in all Oregon.

Juan had seen him lurking about the Dalles, through which place Pete's band had passed, and 'Slippery Jack' had no doubt collected some of his acquaintances of similar proclivities, and followed the party at a convenient distance on the look out for a chance. 'Jist to think,' said Pete, with an air of deep chagrin, 'that I had a rope hitched round that coon's neck six months ago, and didn't hist him 'cos I wanted votes for my eleckshin to the legislatur' — the ungrateful cuss!'

* Hide 'Cache' is a term applied to an Indian hiding-place, where they bury their belongings when they start off on the war-path, or on hunting expeditions.

'Why that doesn't reflect much credit on the institutions of your State, Pete. Is it the custom to canvass the collected scoundrelism of the country at election times?'

'Waal, yer see, if one don't another will; they're all at liberty to vote, good or bad; and as there's more bad than good, for sartin the bad 'uns'll hev it all thar way. Now them horse-thieves are right smart at votin', I tell *yu!* I've known one of 'em ride a hundred and more miles in a day and vote the same ticket at six places, from ten to seventy miles apart.'

'So you refrained from lynching this wretch, who, according to all accounts has murdered half-a-dozen men or so in his time, to make use of him and his friends? I really shouldn't have thought you'd have done such a thing as that, Pete.'

'Now you musn't be hard on me, young Johnny Bull. Thar was a fust-rate contract job goin' fur meat and stores fur the sojers, and the prison and the hospital; and I guess I made some few thousand dollars by turnin' politishin. I voted for my own tender (put in another man's name of course) and paid a purty hansome share to a few more what helped me to get it. I sot up a raanch,* and sent over to Pike County, Missouri, fur my Sally, right away; and Lor' bless her purty face—I'll bet she's a makin' butter an' a thinking

* Farm.

of me at this moment! But I've got thru my perlitical bisness all right naow, and mebbe on this occashin I'll decrease the number of my constitooents by one.'

Pete here stroked the long barrel of his rifle in a caressing manner, and our little discussion dropped.

We had travelled on at a good pace for some time, and now approached the side of the table-land, descending into the valley. The tracks of the party we were pursuing became fresher and fresher, evidencing the fact that we were gaining upon them, when Juan rode back from the front and told us to follow quickly, for he fancied he heard the bellow of a bull a long way off.

In another half-hour the stream we had been following turned off abruptly to the right. Seeing on the left an open piece of grass land, from which I thought a view might perhaps be gained of the valley, I rode across it for a little way, and was suddenly pulled up by seeing before me an immense chasm, from one to two hundred yards wide where I stood, and at least a thousand feet deep. Its sides were perfectly perpendicular, and nothing grew upon them, so that one could see the different strata all the way to the bottom.

This singular rent continued, deepening and widening as it went, till it reached the foot of the valley. Near its mouth, about two miles away, I detected a tiny wreath of blue smoke; but so thin and vapoury was it, that I was quite uncertain whether it was smoke

or not for some time. I imagined at first it must be an Indian camp, for white men generally build a larger fire, and are not particular whether the wood is green or not. I went cautiously along, skirting the side of the precipice, until I got within half a mile of the smoke; then dismounting and keeping behind a large tree, I peeped down again into the depths beneath. Oh, happy spectacle! with what joy I hailed that sight! There were the lost cattle and our two mules, which had been driven as far as they could go that day, and three atrocious-looking ruffians busy cooking their afternoon repast.

I got back to my horse, and rode as hard as I could across the ground between me and the stream, where I soon caught up my party, and told them they were going off the track. This did not prove to be the case though, for the tracks we had followed continued fresher than ever, and the water-course soon took another turn, bringing us by a very steep descent into the valley, where it joined another stream.

The thieves, we had no doubt, had gone up this, in the water again, so as to hide their track, to the mouth of the chasm, which they had ascended, thinking themselves safe from pursuit, to refresh the cattle for another start. Had it not been for my opportune little diversion they would probably have escaped, as we might have searched for them in vain till night stopped us.

We now tied up our horses and proceeded on foot for greater caution, keeping along the side of the hill to avoid any spy who might be posted on the look-out by the banks of the little river, and who might have 'potted' one of us from an ambuscade.

This caution was well founded, for as we neared the mouth of the place where our adversaries were hidden, Pete called my attention to the figure of a man moving stealthily about a little clump of trees. Telling me to remain where I was, and to stop the rest who were following, Pete commenced a series of backwood tactics. Crawling along the ground, dragging his rifle after him, then dodging from one tree or bush to another, Pete approached within easy range of the stranger; when recognising him at once as the veritable 'Slippery Jack' himself, he levelled his weapon and fired. The man leapt into the air and fell stone dead.

Knowing that the sound of the shot would arouse his companions we hastened on, and came upon the three men I had seen round the fire, who were just rushing out to see what was the matter.

Covering them with our revolvers we bade them surrender at once, and told them that as their leader was dead we would spare them for the law to deal with. They did'nt show fight after this, and we bound their wrists firmly with some withes from the banks of the stream.

Collecting our animals together, and seating the

three men on their own horses, we drove them on before us until we found a camping-place for the night; when two of us returned to bury the body of the wretched 'Slippery Jack,' the other two keeping watch over our prisoners. We found upon the body a gold watch, with the name engraved on it of a well-known miner (a former friend of Pete's), who had been unaccountably missing during the preceding winter, and was doubtless one of Jack's victims.

During the night we took it in turns to watch the three men, and in the morning we returned by the way we had come to our companions, who greeted us with a warmth all the greater when they saw our prizes and heard our story.

The whole party after this continued their onward course, with the prisoners, over the remainder of the table land, and through a more pleasant country, past Lake la Hache on to William's Lake, where we delivered over the three captives to the tender mercies of the law, in the shape of a judge promoted by the Colonial Government to that desirable position from the less remunerative one of a policeman. This functionary took our evidence, and sent the ruffians down to New Westminster for trial during the ensuing winter, binding us over to attend there.

I may mention here that the result of that trial was a sentence of fourteen years in the chain-gang, and I often had the pleasure of seeing the desperadoes at

work upon the roads round the colonial metropolis, or grubbing out its eternal stumps, with balls and chains attached to their legs, under the close surveillance of a well-armed defender of the peace.

From William's Lake we continued to a place called The Forks of Quesnelle, across which river lay the Cariboo country, the El Dorado we had toiled to reach.

We had heard doleful stories from descending miners of the hardships of the diggings, the perpetual rains, the spongy ground and consequent wet-sinking, the enormous prices of everything; winding up in all cases, where the recital came from an unlucky narrator, that we had better return as soon as we could, or we should have to beg our way down again. All suggestions of this kind were at once scouted as unworthy to be followed by bold Britons, and now and then we certainly had the satisfaction of seeing a man going down with his pack appearing remarkably heavy, and once we met some lucky fellows with three mules well laden with gold-dust.

After crossing the Quesnelle we only had about sixty miles farther to travel before reaching William's Creek, but those sixty miles! We got our animals as far as Keithley's Creek, after struggling through a sea of mud with a bottom composed of roots of trees, and here we had to get rid of them, for no creature but a man was capable of carrying anything over the remainder of the journey at that season of the year. We therefore sold

our mules to a returning packer for half price, and thought ourselves lucky to get so much.

The cargo was made up into packs weighing about eighty pounds each, and with these comfortable little appendages on our backs we had to travel forty miles on foot. We had to make a double trip too, storing half our load on the first occasion and returning for it; as there was nearly one hundred and sixty pounds per man all round.

All the sides of the mountains were soaked with the melting snows and the soft drizzling rain, which seemed to fall for an average of three days out of four. The ground itself was a soft spongy mass, and the inferior vegetation consisted of various mosses growing amongst the roots of spruce and balsam fir-trees. The trail through this had become trodden into a filthy quagmire, with fallen trees across it every few feet, over which it was no pleasant thing to clamber with our heavy loads. Added to this the path was generally very steep, often at an angle of forty or fifty degrees, and occasionally skirting precipices, where a false step would have sent the wayfarer to destruction.

We were glad indeed to pass Antler Creek and reach the Bald Mountain, on the other side of which lay William's Creek. This mountain was some seven or eight thousand feet high, and from that fact the upper portions of it were even then, in the end of June, covered with snow, which a sharp frost every night rendered

sufficiently hard to walk upon in the early morning before the sun gained power.

At last, after sixteen days hard travelling to and fro, we landed the whole of our cargo safely at William's Creek, and took a day or two to rest from our toils and determine the spot upon which our muscle should be exercised in seeking for the evasive spoil beneath.

CHAPTER IX.

WILLIAM'S CREEK.

A GOLD-SEEKER is eminently a creature of circumstances. He has none of the opportunities of investigating beforehand the path he is about to pursue that are granted to ordinary mortals, but is the victim, or, as the case may be, the lucky follower, of the first likely rumour that reaches his ears. He represents in fact but another phase of the desperate gambler.

Science can assist him but little in his search for the capricious treasure; unlike the baser metals, no rules or theories at present known are in reality available for revealing its whereabouts. Practical experience is indeed of some avail, and one might rely better upon the opinion of a few old gold-miners, than upon the whole Geological Society for the probability of gold existing at any given spot. But even the judgment of experience is overthrown again and again.

There are or were in California some diggings called 'Greenhorn,' and the name arose thus: In 1851, or thereabouts, a large body of men were at work upon the bars of the river on which these diggings are situate, and were taking out gold in considerable quan-

tities. One of the recognised axioms of gold-mining is that the precious metal has originally existed in the quartz veins permeating the hills, and that the gold which is collected has been from time to time washed away from these quartz veins, as the surface became decomposed, and has from its superior gravity found its way to the beds of the streams. Judge then of the surprise of the old hands when they saw a party of emigrants just arrived by the ordinary mode of transit at that time, 'across the plains,' take their station upon the summit of a detached mount in the centre of the valley, instead of beside the others in the bed of the stream, and commence to dig and delve with all the energies at their command. Still greater was their surprise when it was found that the spot selected by the emigrants in sheer ignorance, and which no professed miner would have looked at for a moment, turned out to be the richest for miles round, and 'Greenhorn,' thus named from its pioneers, attracted one of the greatest rushes known.

We soon found ourselves in the quandary of not knowing where to go; one advised one thing, one another, and a third another, all equally certain to be 'a dead thing,' until we were fairly puzzled to determine.

For two or three miles down William's Creek all the available ground appeared to be taken up, and the place bore a wonderful resemblance to an ant's nest.

The unfortunate little stream had been treated in the most ignominious manner. A little above the town it flowed along silvery and clear as it had been wont to do; but soon inroads were made upon its volume in the shape of ditches cut from it, and continued along the sides of the hills, to feed the huge over-shot water-wheels that appeared in all directions. Then its course became diverted into five or six different channels, which were varied every now and then as the miners sought to work the surface formerly covered by them. At intervals dirty streams were poured forth by the sluices, in which the earth dug from beneath was being washed by the water; and here and there the stream was insulted by being shut up for a few hundred yards in a huge wooden trough, called a 'flume.'

Across the breadth of the little valley was a strange heterogeneous gathering of smaller flumes, carrying water to the different diggings and supported at various heights from the ground by props, windlasses at the mouths of shafts, water-wheels, banks of 'tailings' (the refuse earth washed through the sluices), and miners' log huts.

On the sides of the hills the primeval forests had been cleared for a short distance upwards, to provide timber for mining purposes, and logs for the huts. These abodes were more numerous on the hill sides than in the bottom of the valley, as being more safe from removal.

The town comprised the ordinary series of rough wooden shanties, stores, restaurants, grog shops, and gambling saloons; and, on a little eminence, the official residence, tenanted by the Gold Commissioner and his assistants and one policeman, with the British flag permanently displayed in front of it, looked over the whole.

In and out of this nest the human ants poured all day and night, for in wet-sinking the labour must be kept up without ceasing all through the twenty-four hours, Sundays included. It was a curious sight to look down the Creek at night, and see each shaft with its little fire, and its lantern, and the dim ghostly figures gliding about from darkness into light, like the demons at a Drury Lane pantomime, while an occasional hut was illuminated by some weary labourer returning from his nightly toil.

The word here seemed to be *work*, and nothing else; only round the bar-rooms and the gambling-tables were a few loafers and gamblers to be seen. Idling was too expensive a luxury in a place where wages were from two to three pounds per day, and flour sold at six shillings a pound.

The mingling of noises was as curious as that of objects. From the hills came the perpetual cracking and thudding of axes, intermingling with the crash of falling trees, and the grating undertone of the saws, as they fashioned the logs into planks and boards. From

the bottom of the valley rose the splashing and creaking of water-wheels, the grating of shovels, the din of the blacksmith's hammer sharpening pickaxes, and the shouts passed from the tops of the numerous shafts to the men below, as the emptied bucket was returned by the windlass.

In such a Babel of busy mortals it was not to be expected that much reliable information was to be got; but at length I came across an individual who answered my numerous enquiries, pointing out from time to time the shafts representing the few rich paying claims.

'Thar's the Adams claim—they took out five hundred ounces yesterday; and that un with the shed over the shaft (guess they're afeard of ketchin' cold), that's the Steele claim; and away down thar by the *cañon* there's the Black Jack tunnel, and I reckon they'll strike it pretty rich soon!' and so on for some dozen names or so.

'And what are all these other shafts around us? arn't they taking out any gold?' I asked.

'Waal no, yer see they're all after it mighty smart, but there ain't many of 'em as'll strike it I don't think, for the "pay dirt" don't run wide, and if one gets it, the other five or six on each side of him caan't strike it nohow.'

My informant was one of a regular type often met with in these places, a regular 'prospector;' that is to

say, a man who gives up all his time and labour as a rule for other people's benefit. Thus, the discoverer of William's Creek was a man named Dutch William. He first crossed the Bald Mountain alone, with his blankets, and a few days' provisions, and his pick, shovel, and prospecting plan on his back. On seeing the Creek (which for its extent has probably produced more gold than any spot in the world) he hastened back, procured some companions, and with their assistance sunk a shaft some fifty feet deep, at the foot of which they came upon a strata of blue clayey gravel rich with gold. When the party returned for a fresh stock of provisions they were followed, and an immense rush took place. The ground all round them was speedily taken up; and, unfortunately for Dutch William and his friends, the spot they had staked out contained but a very narrow portion of the lead, which was exhausted in a few weeks. I remember in the following winter aiding in a subscription to enable the unlucky discoverer of this mine of wealth to leave the country.

My new friend told me that his name was Jake Walker; that he was one of the first body of men who had found the Cariboo country, and that previous to that he had been mining with varied success on the bars of the Fraser River since 1858, having come up from California, where he had left his ship in '49, and taken to mining.

His appearance was singularly battered. His large feet were encased in india-rubber boots (called gum-boots in the vernacular), which covered the thighs, and fastened round the waist. He pointed with deep chagrin to a large hole in one of them, which rendered them useless against water, and explained that it had been caused by the root of a tree hidden in the mud, whilst he was walking over from Jack of Clubs Creek that morning. His trousers exhibited a strange instance of ingenuity in a place where those necessary garments cost twenty dollars a pair. They were composed of discarded flour sacks sewn together, with remains of the various brands that had once advertised the contents of the sacks appearing in all directions upon the surface. An old blue shirt, a hat, from holes in which the wearer's scanty hair cropped out, and a belt containing a sheath-knife and a rusty revolver, completed his costume.

Another piece of information he vouchsafed was, that he was 'tarnation hard up;' so I took the old fellow to our tent, and we had some dinner together. Whilst eating our frugal meal, I told Jake I wondered he didn't go to work in one of the rich claims where they were paying men sixteen dollars a day to work, as it was certain an experienced hand like himself would readily gain employment. Jake's reply was characteristic: 'Waal, I've been my own boss (master) for the laast thirteen years, and I reckon

I never intend to work for no other man again. Thar ain't a trader on the Creek but what'll give old Jake jawbone (credit) fur his regular hash and whiskey ; and I allus pays sometime. I'll bet the Pacific Oshin to a cup o' cold water, I strike it before the season's run out.'

Abashed at my presumption, I turned the conversation to the subject of Jack of Clubs Creek, and hazarded the suggestion that he had been prospecting there.

'Yes I hev,' he said, 'and I calculate I'll create a purty sudden sensation thereabouts shortly. But I tell *yu* it'll be heavy papers gettin' gold out o' that crik ; it's deep, an' it's wet, an' a man'll hev to work like a hoss 'fore he'll get to the bottom ; but when he's thar (if he don't get drowned fust) take my word for it, he'll strike it rich !'

'I tell yer what,' he continued, 'I'll make a trade with yer. I see you've got enough provishuns fur two or three months here ; I haven't got no grub, nor no money, but I've staked out my claim on Jack o' Clubs, and paid that darned Britisher up thar tu dollars and a haaf fur doin' it. Naow there's plenty of ground all round me, and ef you coons like to find the supplies, we'll jine together, and put down a shaaft.'

About this time my companions dropped in, and we all held a conclave on Jake's proposal, the result of which was that we agreed to go over the mountain and look at the place the next day.

Jake passed the night in our tent, and with break of day we all started and reached the summit of the Bald Mountain soon after the sun had risen.

This mountain is the source of numerous creeks, which diverge from it in different directions. Jack of Clubs Creek took its rise within a hundred yards of the spot from which William's Creek also issued; and thus, according to the theory of the gold being washed out of the hills by the streams, if William's Creek were rich, Jack of Clubs ought also to be so. Wherever we went on this mountain, quartz, the matrix of gold, was abundant, and afforded some idea of the wondrous wealth contained beneath.

We followed the course of our new creek for two or three miles, and judging by all those appearances which miners rely upon, the place was the most likely one that could be imagined. Our hopes rose with the prospect, and when our guide showed us the point he had selected, a spot where, if gold existed at all in the bed of the valley, we must hit upon it, we at once agreed unanimously to join our fortunes with his for the season.

The next week was occupied in packing over our stores of provisions and the requisite tools, and building a good log hut to contain us all. One day we fell in with Pete the drover, who had found a capital market for his stock, and in the warmth of his heart gave us a couple of quarters of beef and a sheep; this enabled us to live quite luxuriously for a long time.

Our company consisted of five, and we staked out our claim and registered it at once. Two of us set to work in the woods to get out timbers, another commenced digging a ditch along the side of the hill to bring water power into play, and the remaining two proceeded to sink a shaft.

After tremendous labour we succeeded in getting down a depth of about forty feet, when a freshet came down the creek one night and swamped the shaft, filling it up almost to the brim with *débris*. A new sort of pumping gear had then to be invented, but all to no purpose, for we could not get our shaft clear again of the mud and water. Then another was sunk a little way off, but just as the bottom was reached again we were drowned out, and we began to despair of ever getting to the bottom at all. Still old Jake's confidence was unabated, and he kept up our pluck by numerous stories of luck as the reward of perseverance, after the style of Bruce and the spider.

We worked all through that summer and autumn, and at the end of that time we had a new shaft down for a depth of fifty feet. We knew from the quality of the ground that we were now nearing the bed-rock, close to which we hoped our fortune lay. But our provisions were nearly exhausted, and our money entirely so, and our clothes were worn to rags. Storekeepers were obdurate, and refused credit on the strength of our expectations, and nothing remained,

therefore, but to leave our claim till the next season, in the hope of then reaping our reward.

We left the greater part of our provisions with old Jake, who intended to winter up there and trap martins, and keep an eye on the claim; while Pat and I turned our faces once more towards civilisation, with hearts heavier than our purses, but not half displeased either to leave our exile in the wilderness for a six months' sojourn in the pleasanter lower country.

Down the road we tramped, with a pair of blankets apiece on our backs, and a few days' rations, looking out for work at the roadside farms we passed, but failing to obtain it through every chance of the kind having been snapped up long before by broken miners preceding us in their exodus.

After a few days we were reduced to the frugal fare of turnips, gathered from the fields surrounding the wayside houses, scattered at intervals of ten or fifteen miles along the road. By the time we reached Fort Yale again we were considerably lowered in body and spirits by the unaccustomed poorness of our diet. We made every effort at this town to obtain work, but without success. Tired out and faint we trudged a distance of four miles farther to the landing-stage for steamers at Emery's Bar, intending to appeal to the generosity of the captain for a free passage to Victoria.

Arrived at Emery's Bar we kindled a fire near the edge of a little plateau, and spread our blankets with a

view of making sleep serve the purpose of a supper. A steamer was expected up in the morning, and as at the stage of water which then existed it could not get any farther than this point towards Yale, we had a faint hope of earning a good breakfast the next morning by helping to unload.

As we were smoking a pipe—luckily a little of the weed that 'cheers but not inebriates' was left to us—I heard a cheery laugh a little way off on the bank of the river beneath us; while my nostrils, rendered acute by the privation of my other organs, detected on the evening air the delicious scent of frizzling bacon. Utterly unable to resist the impulse, Pat and I bounded down the little hill, and stood before what to us was a pleasant sight—a roaring fire, and a party of four men sitting down to a hearty supper of bacon and newly-baked bread, spread upon a sail on the ground. Moored to the bank close by were three huge canoes, and behind the fire was a large tent rigged up with oars and sails. From this we gathered, as afterwards appeared to be the case, that the men were engaged in boating the freight from the steamers up to Yale in their canoes.

One of the party, a hardy-looking ex-Californian, immediately hailed us with, 'Well, boys, didn't know we had any neighbours to-night. Take a seat by the fire. Why you com'd out of the woods thar as sudden as a bear out of a hot log! Kind'er skeared me, 'pon my soul! Hev some supper?'

It is needless to say we did not refuse this kind invitation, which was followed by one to bring our blankets down, and spread them in their tent, as they had plenty of room. We did such ample justice to the fare that even our hosts seemed surprised; but they vied with each other in placing their store at our disposal till we were satisfied. With all their rough exteriors and manners, there is more kindness of heart in one of these unpolished denizens of wild countries than in a host of your town parasites.

After supper we replenished pipes round the fire, and our friends seeing that we looked wayworn and hard up, enquired what we had been doing and what we purposed doing. We told our story, and of course said we were looking for work, offering to lend the party a hand next day in return for our entertainment.

'No,' said the person who had taken the initiative in addressing us, and who seemed to be the captain of the party, 'I reckon I don't keep a boarding-house, and you're welcome, boys, to what we've got here. We've all of us seen rough times ourselves, 'fore now, I guess. But look here,' he added, 'ef you're the raal grit both on yer, and ain't afeard to risk yer 'tarnal carcasses fur good big wages, I guess we ken find a job fur yer. This work of ours is mighty risky though, and you'll run a big chaance every day of losing the number of your mess, for if one of them craaft (pointing to the canoes) gits upset in this tarnation river, there's a

rare poor show fur a man to see his mammy again, you bet!'

I closed with the offer at once; and Pat, with tears in his eyes, told the captain, with native warmth, that 'be jabers he'd go to the ind of the worruld for him an' 'ud run Old Nick a race in the nixt, if that was all.'

We turned into our blankets with a more comfortable feeling than we had had for some time past; and at early dawn were aroused by the snorting of the steamer heading up the stream to us.

Soon we were at work like niggers, amongst a crowd of Indians and deck-hands, unloading the freight and piling it up on the shore ready for transmission to our canoes. In two or three hours the steamer was cleared out, and we proceeded to get ready the canoes, which must have been made of wondrous trees, for they carried about four tons apiece. They were nearly fifty feet in length, with a beam of six feet, and each one burned and chiselled out of a single cedar-tree! They had been strengthened for their present use by strong ribs and braces, and were fitted up for eight oars, with a twenty-foot oar at the stern for steering: a rudder would not have had enough power in that tremendous stream, and the eddies and whirlpools caused by it. In the bow of each was a strong stanchion to fix the tow-rope to; and a man was stationed in the bows to watch the run of the current, and to look after hidden

rocks; helping to steer, moreover, when necessity occurred, with a paddle.

The rowers were stout Northern Indians, all picked men; and each canoe had a white man to steer, and another to take the hardly less arduous place in the bows. It is a curious circumstance that the Indians, who have all their lives been used to the management of canoes, cannot be trusted to take the place of steersman of one of these larger craft; in bad water, with all their knowledge and skill, they lack the nerve of their white brethren. Pat and I had to take the place of bowmen, and commenced our apprenticeship to our future posts in a contemplated trip through the *cañons* to Lytton.

The first step of our upward journey of four miles to Yale was to carry the freight about two hundred yards along the shore, to the other side of the rapid that prevented the progress of the steamer. The canoes were then towed empty through the rapid, and precious hard work it was to get them over even then. When this had been done they were reloaded, and we were able to get along at the rate of about a mile an hour with the oars for three miles. Then came another rapid or 'riffle,' called Saw Mill Bar, but we managed to tow the canoes through this loaded, and shortly afterwards landed our cargo at Yale.

We had to make six trips in all to get up the whole of the freight, and at the end of that time Pat and

I thought ourselves well qualified to start on the more hazardous expedition through the *cañons*. The work was fearfully hard, but its excitement overcame this and the fears of danger too; and I could realise from it something of the feelings of a soldier entering upon a battle, who, I don't suppose, relishes it much until his blood gets warmed a little.

CHAPTER X.

BOATING ON THE FRASER.

About a week after this we got our load for Lytton, and after a thorough overhauling of our little fleet, and patching up every possible defect, we made a start at break of day; reaching Fort Yale about nine in the morning, where we received hearty wishes for our safety and success from the little community of merchants.

We dragged on to the first portage, where all our freight had to be unloaded and carried over the rocks for some distance; the canoes also being taken out, and pushed along skids and rollers to the place of re-embarkation. Then a little rowing and a tiresome piece of scrambling over the rocks, with all hands, save the steersman, on the tow-rope. Many a sousing in the river we got, as one of the line of towers would miss his footing and slip into the water, sometimes up to his knees, but more often to his neck; only saving himself from being carried away, by his hold on the rope, and the aid of his companions.

So were our days employed from morning till night; when, too exhausted often to change our wet clothes,

or to cook our suppers, we would coil ourselves in our blankets by the camp-fire at the side of the river, and dream of rocks and falls, and eddies and whirlpools, with visions and remembrances of our quiet homes every now and then intruding themselves on the picture. Then we would rise with the dawn and enter again on a fresh day's toil, sometimes only to see at the end of it the place we had left in the morning, not more than a couple of miles away.

It may give some idea of the strength of the current, when I tell my readers that at a spot some ten miles above Yale, a little over one hundred miles from the mouth of the river, the Fraser, which is twelve hundred miles long, and receives numerous almost equally large streams in its course, flows through a channel in the rocks of only *one hundred and sixty feet* in width. The sides of this place, graphically called 'Hell's Gate,' are nearly perpendicular, and the high-water mark (in the summer, when the snows have melted) is no less than one hundred feet above low-water mark in the winter.

At the end ot the twelfth day we hailed the sight of the blue waters of the Thompson, running side by side with the sandy-coloured stream of the Fraser for some distance, and after a sharp pull reached the end of our journey; blessing our stars that we had escaped all the dangers that had surrounded us, and got over our hardships for a little while.

The crew and officers both took sailors' licence on getting into port; and we didn't make up our minds for four or five days to go down again. The trip had been so favourable to the proprietors, in a pecuniary sense, that another one had been determined on; and we all felt something like the Chinaman who will render himself a substitute for a person sentenced to capital punishment, on being paid a certain sum down (about fifty pounds I have heard) and given a fortnight's grace to spend the money in.

The passage down was the most dangerous part of the business while it lasted, for instead of dragging painfully up-stream along the shore, we were rushing down in the centre of the stream almost at the mercy of the current; gliding with fearful rapidity over the very spots where we had been obliged to take our freight, and sometimes the boats themselves, out of the water, in going up. At only two places, the Great and Little Falls, we still had to make portages.

Now was the time that the bowman's eyes had to be strained to the utmost for the treacherous rocks, often in full mid-stream, and his voice and muscles exercised to avoid the awful whirlpools which showed themselves in the ever-changing waters.

In four hours' travelling we had reached Boston Bar, nearly half way down; there we stopped to recruit ourselves; for the rowers had been hard at work every inch of the distance, in order to give sufficient

steerage-way to the canoes. This is the great point in strong water; always get as much way as you can on a boat, so that you can steer her anywhere. We saw a sad instance of the want of attention to this shortly afterwards.

While at Boston Bar, a peculiar national fight occured. A peaceful Chinaman had set up a little washing establishment, and given forth to the world an advertisement of his trade in cabalistic characters posted on the exterior of his abode. Although these could not be read by the outer barbarians, yet, coupled with the strong smell of soapsuds and ironing, they were a sufficient index to John's occupation, and many a weary miner gladly availed himself of the opportunity of shirking so non-virile a task as washing his own shirt.

Some of our Indians had somewhere or other, *contra bonos mores* in general, and to the infraction of the colonial laws in particular, got hold of some fire-water, and in the ordinary Indian way became very truculent and unmanageable.

The party, numbering four, went to the outside of John's shop, and commenced to chaff John in Chinook—a not very convenient medium for the purpose. Finding chaff to have but an indifferent effect on John's good temper, they assailed him in a more vulnerable spot, his devotion to the *almighty dollar*, by smashing one or two of his windows.

John now began to expostulate volubly in a mixture of Chinese and Chinook, and I observed him retire to the interior of his den, and prepare one of his irons. These are of peculiar construction, resembling a saucepan, with the sides perforated, and the bottom polished; the interior is filled with live coals, and the handle is about two feet long.

On John's reappearance, his assailants, gaining additional courage, made slight personal assaults upon the unhappy washerman, still without raising his combative propensities; but when at length, intoxicated by success, one of the Indians attacked that *sanctum sanctorum* of a Chinaman, his pigtail, John became alive to the situation.

Rushing into the back premises he seized his iron from the fire; brandishing it round, he brought it with a sudden swoop fell upon the head of the nearest redman. A lot of ashes escaped from the receptacle, and immediately frizzled in the hair of the unlucky Siwash, well lubricated with salmon oil. John used his weapon with such success that all four Indians were soon skedaddling towards the river, with their hair full of burning cinders, scenting the atmosphere in no pleasing manner, and shaking themselves as a burning fragment would fall on their skins. Into the river they plunged, and, the stream being reasonably still here owing to a large eddy, they soon swam out of the way of the rocks with which the infuriate Celestial

pelted them. This termination of the quarrel was eminently satisfactory, for it rendered our crew sober again, and we knew all their energies would soon be called into action.

As we were getting ready for another start, a canoe manned by six rowers and a steersman passed by, and we noticed that the navigation of the craft seemed very loose. We made off as soon as we could, and looked rather anxiously ahead for the party that had passed; for two or three miles below there was a very bad place, and our captain hoped to get within hail, and direct them how to steer over it. We rowed a good sharp stroke, and just got near them as they entered on the bad water.

A large rock was in the centre of the stream; and it was necessary to steer close past this, with a strong way on the boat, to avoid getting broadside on to a cross current that came round the other side of the rock, and caused a large whirlpool, where any boat must be swallowed up to a certainty.

We shouted out to them to keep close to the rock and row hard; but they only attended to our instructions imperfectly, and we saw the boat beginning to swerve round as if it were gradually getting out of control. Again we shouted to them with all our might to row for their lives, but they only got more flustered and excited in the presence of the danger they saw ahead, and the steersman, who was a negro, we could

see was trembling and shaking with fear. Meanwhile, the boat was drifting along broadside on to the tremendous breakers without any sort of command being exercised over her.

'God help 'em!' said our captain, 'they're gone coons! nothin' but a miracle 'll save 'em now. Sometimes the water changes fur a minute er tu, and that tarnation whirl may be smooth water when they gets to it. But no, there's no chance of it now, and there they go, dead on to it, by Heaven! Pull on boys, harder, fur God's sake! we may pick up one er tu of them poor creatures,' he added, as we all saw the sad spectacle that followed, and heard the dying shriek of the fated crew.

Their canoe had been half filled by the breakers through which we saw them drifting helplessly, broadside on, and as they neared the whirlpool they lifted up their hands and shrieked aloud, for they knew there was no hope of salvation as the set of the current drew them closer and closer to the watery abyss.

A scream of 'Mother!' I heard, through the roar of the waters, from the lips of a fine young lad, as he jumped far into the current in the hope of clearing the whirl. But no, alas! the under-tow seized his legs and drew him into the horrible vortex, despite his struggles. At the same moment the boat gave one spin round, and slowly, never so slowly, as it seemed, sunk beneath the waters; with the rest of her crew standing up, with hands out-

stretched, and faces such as I hope never to see more, till the waters rose over the head of the last of them, drowning their dying cries, and all was a blank! Never shall I forget that fearful sight; those weird figures, sinking slowly down into their watery grave, like shadows from another world, drawn out of this abnormal sphere by some unholy machinery.

Almost before the boat had sunk we shot by the spot on the current at lightning speed, and a little farther on, where the stream abated, we headed our canoe sharp round, in the hope that one or two of the poor fellows might yet struggle to the surface; but, after waiting long, no sign came, not even a particle of the boat; and we were obliged to pursue our way, to escape being shut in by the darkness. No word was spoken for long, and tears stood in the eyes of most of us, including even the stolid Indians. In another five hours we were safe at home, and rendering those tardy thanks to a safe-guiding Providence which are too often forgotten by men inured to danger, until some terrible episode as that we had witnessed brings them to a sense of the perils they have escaped.

Not a trace was ever found of that boat or its occupants. The negro was known to have had a considerable sum on his person in a belt, and the others had more or less money in their possession, so that there were many needy jackals seeking for their bodies; but nothing ever came save a felt hat, which

was picked up by an Indian next day below Fort Hope, and so the beasts of prey were fain at last to give up their quest and betake themselves to their previous occupations, which we will hope were of a more honourable nature.

We rested a few days at Yale, and then got another load for Lytton. We made our second trip safely, and in rather better time than the first, as the water was lower; but Pat and I had seen almost enough of that kind of work, and were not sorry that there was no more of it to be done if we had wished it. The Indians were all paid off, and it was arranged that four of us and the captain should travel down to Victoria in one of the canoes, taking a hunting excursion among the islands in the Gulf of Georgia on our way.

The day before we started I had an unpleasantly narrow escape myself. The place where we camped (the same where Pat and I first fell in with the party) was on the shore of the river, fronting a large eddy caused by the sand bar, round the extremity of which a very strong current always ran.

We were in need of a supply of sugar for our voyage, and I was despatched to a Chinaman's store across the river, in a little light canoe, to obtain some. Now it required tolerable skilful work to cross the river at this point; the great danger was in heading out of the eddy running up-stream into the current running down; if great care were not then exercised the canoe was very likely to get upset.

The day was warm, so I had no clothes on but a pair of duck trousers and a shirt, with a pair of slippers on my feet, when I started across; and this was very lucky for me. I had noticed a lot of squaws and Indians bathing in the bend caused by the sandbank, and as I was nearing the edge of the current I heard a tremendous shout from one of the bathers, which caused me to look round; it didn't appear to be anything more than that one of the squaws had cut her foot on a sharp piece of rock, and I was about to look ahead again, as I knew I ought not to have taken my eyes off my own position at all, when in an instant I was whisked into the water and saw my canoe flying off in the current. My inattention had caused the frail craft to head the stream in a wrong direction, and my being spilt was the natural consequence.

I struck out as hard as I could, but soon found that I must relinquish breast-swimming, as it placed my legs too deep, and they were caught by the under-tow. I therefore swam on my side, but was surprised at the little progress I could make, although a very strong swimmer. The water was boiling and seething all round me, and it was as hard to force one's limbs through it as if it were treacle. There was no other canoe or boat on the shore, so I knew that all my chance lay in reaching the latter by my own endeavours. After struggling for some minutes I found myself but little nearer, and knowing that my strength would be ex-

pended before I could reach it, I turned upon my back to rest for a few seconds. While in this position the nature of the water suddenly changed, as it often does in these places, and I found myself impelled into the centre of the current without any power whatever to prevent it.

I now almost gave up all thoughts of escaping, and began to have unpleasant thoughts of home and my friends, till I found that the current was much the best place to be in after all, as it required little or no exertion to keep to the surface in it; and I hoped, by allowing myself to be carried on, I should get past the cursed eddy, and be able gradually to near the shore I had left.

Relieved of the necessity for the vigorous exertions I had been making before, I looked round me, and saw poor Pat running down the bank with frantic gestures and shouts. A little way from me I saw something better yet—a limb of a tree floating quietly along. A few strokes brought me to it, and, placing one arm over it, I used the other to bring me gradually to the shore.

All this time the water was deathly cold, and I was getting numbed and powerless; when, after drifting for about two miles, the river suddenly narrowed, and enabled me to near the shore rapidly. I perceived soon after the trunk of a fallen tree projecting some distance into the stream; and leaving my support, I

made a final effort, and reached the tree, to which I clung with desperation.

A minute or two after Pat came up, followed by the captain, bearing a rope and a bottle of brandy. The rope was skilfully cast to me; I seized it, and was dragged ashore, where I fainted dead away for some minutes, until I was revived by the brandy with which Pat and the captain had been bathing my face.

I took such a pull at that brandy bottle as would have made an ordinary individual stare, and was able, after a little, to get back to the camp with the assistance of my partial deliverers. I don't think many other men have had such an escape from that death-dealing stream as I had, and it made me remember my early swimming-lessons with gratitude, mingled with the wish that that useful art were more generally taken up by others in their youth.

The following morning we got up early, and our boat having been got ready, we started off on our downward course, the old canoe travelling along merrily under our oars. We soon passed Fort Hope, where a change in the direction of the river enabled us to hoist our sail and proceed without labour, except such as steering involved.

About mid-day we reached the mouth of Harrison River, where we took dinner, and then proceeded again. We had occasion to call at a place a little below this, called the Sumass, a considerable tract of

open meadow land, fringed with trees and brushwood, and covered at the high-water season by the overflow of the river.

The water had now been drained off this land for about two months, and a crop of hay was being gathered by a few men who dared to brave the mosquitoes. Pat was deputed as the messenger, being furnished for the occasion with a muslin mosquito bar to guard his face and neck, and exhorted to keep his hands in his pockets.

Following these instructions, Pat pursued his way through the swamp, the winged torments singing round his head in futile rage, and endeavouring to probe the unwilling surface of a pair of short Bedford cords. After accomplishing his mission, he was returning to the boat by a shorter route, when he came across a herd of Spanish cattle. One of these took umbrage at his scarlet shirt, and immediately gave chase, followed by the rest. Pat ran for his life to gain the woods skirting the river, and to get breath threw off the mosquito bar. He just reached the woods in time, as the foremost bull came tearing after him full butt against a big pine-tree. The next minute Pat went in up to his neck in a bog, from which he had great difficulty in extricating himself by the aid of a projecting limb. The cattle knew better than to follow him there; so he escaped, and came running out on the beach to us in a sad plight, literally black with the

mosquitoes that had settled all over him on his emerging from the swamp.

Seeing the insects flying round him in myriads, we shouted to him to stand off, and pushed the boat out a few yards; for we knew if the wretches got to the boat they would follow us for miles, and give us no peace.

'And ho' am I to git into that boat?' asked Pat.

'Ye'll hev to swim tu it I reckon,' replied the captain.

'But shure I can't shwim a sthroak, cap'n dear!'

'Waal, then you'll hev to stop whar ye be. I'm blessed if I'm goin' to be chawed up by them infarnal bloodsuckers.'

'Och! shure I'll drown like a pig. What'll I do at all!'

I unshipped the steer-oar, and let it float out towards Pat, holding the end tight. Pat gathered his courage, and goaded to desperation by the insects, made a mighty plunge, and caught hold of the oar as he came up, when we hauled him alongside, and dragged him in. We had some paraffin oil aboard for our evening lamp, and after rubbing Pat's face and hands with this, the pain of the mosquito bites was much abated, but his face looked very like an extra-swollen currant pudding for some time.

We rowed on down the river, meeting a steamer or two on the way, till late in the evening we saw the lights of New Westminster, and tied up at one of the

wharves of the noble capital; pretty well tired after our day's journey of ninety miles.

We all went off to sleep in our blankets in the bottom of the canoe for that night; reserving the next day for a turn round the place, principally with a view of improving our wardrobe, which was not of the stamp expected in the more civilised latitudes we had come into.

The little town had grown a bit since the spring, and our appearance, as we passed up the street in the morning, called forth many applications from the enterprising Jewish proprietors of dry-goods stores. We made ourselves a little tidy, bought a couple of shot guns, some ammunition, and fishing lines, and rowed off again in the afternoon. Just before night we got out of the mouth of the Fraser, and pulled round to Point Roberts, just within the boundary line of American territory. Here we met a retired sailor named Portugee Joe, who had gone in for a comfortable existence upon a very small farm, supplemented by the proceeds of his gun and fishing-boat.

Joe had taken unto himself a maid of the forest, and had built himself a large snug log-house, in and out of which a number of lusty little half-breeds were scampering. There was plenty of room for all of us, whiskey galore, and any amount of game and fish to be had for the killing; so we counted reasonably on a very pleasant holiday after the hard season's work we had gone through.

CHAPTER XI.

A HOLIDAY.

If any of my readers have happened to see the Gulf of Georgia, with its shores and islands, they will I think bear testimony with me to its almost unequalled beauty.

Perfectly land-locked for a length of some two hundred miles, with an average breadth of fifty or sixty, its blue surface is dotted with innumerable islands rising majestically out of the water, and covered with primeval forests, in which here and there appear lovely spaces of natural pasturage.

All along the shores of the mainland the horizon is shut in by snow-capped mountains, above which, to the southward, towers the lordly cone of Mount Baker, an extinct volcano some thirteen thousand feet high. On the Vancouver Island side are mountains again, though not so high, forming the requisite contrast to their brethren opposite by the variety of their tints.

Here, too, are richer signs of savage life than there are inland; the waters are specked with the white sails of canoes, and the banks are dotted with Indian villages; their occupants swarming round them in

blankets of many hues; giving the picture the little dash of bright colour which the artist loves. Occasionally, too, one comes across a peculiar feature of the scene—an Indian burial-place—generally in some lonely and isolated spot, where the few sombre pines spring up from crevices in the grey barren rock.

The Indians do not bury their dead; but when one of their number dies, his corpse is attired in his best apparel, and is placed in a square box about a yard high and long by two feet wide. The knees are thus brought up level with the head, in something the same position as the deceased adopted when sitting on the ground by the camp fire. The box is fixed high up in a tree, and round it are hung the dead man's favourite weapons and belongings, such as his musket or bow and arrows, his paddle (sometimes even his canoe), and any article of clothing he particularly affected. Some strange medleys are often exhibited thus, sufficient almost to provoke mirth in the eyes of the civilised stranger, in spite of the sanctity of the spot.

I remember once inspecting the relics of a chief of note. They included a good-sized canoe, suspended from a tree, at a height of some thirty feet from the ground, by strips of dressed bark. From the sides of the canoe hung various articles, among which were several paddles, the skeleton of a dog, some blankets (which had once been red, but had now, by the action of the wind and rain, become nearly black), the rusty

barrel of an old flint musket, a bow and spear, two bear skins, a pair of old trousers (very ragged), and—to crown the offerings—an old beaver hat, and a *crinoline*. The latter had probably been placed there by a devoted daughter, in the hope that when her father's spirit was called away to the happy hunting-ground, he might carry away with him this questionable female *appanage* as a dowry for the spouse he should adopt in his new sphere ; while the beaver (not a thing commonly to be found in those parts) was doubtless added as a make-weight for the poverty of the husband's raiment in the matter of trousers, when the celestial pilgrimage should commence.

The spot that Portugee Joe had selected for his homestead was particularly pleasant. Sheltered from the cold winds of the north and east by a protecting headland, it stood close to the margin of the sea, in a little natural meadow fringed with woods ; with a bright sparkling stream rushing past, on its way from the hills to the sea. There is but little rise and fall in the tides here, so the house and meadow were safe from inundation ; but the currents in this little inland sea are very variable, and of such force in many places between the islands that even powerful steamers have great difficulty in making headway against them.

At break of day Pat and I went out, with a shot gun apiece, to look after some wild ducks, of which we had seen innumerable quantities about the low-lying

marshes at the mouth of the river. We got into a little canoe, and paddled along till we saw the ducks getting thick; but they were all the common black ducks, which we could now afford to despise, though they would have been priceless delicacies up at the mines. After a little we started a couple of mallards, and Pat and I each brought down our birds, but owing to the want of a dog we could not find them. We had better luck soon though, for we got among some teal, and brought home half-a-dozen at breakfast-time.

Such a breakfast! just the sort of one our forefathers would have relished centuries ago. Wild profusion of luxuries, but all dressed perforce in the simplest manner, with no sauce save a hunter's appetite to enhance their richness. Oysters, clams, salmon, trout, venison, wild duck, and grouse, formed the *menu*; washed down with good strong coffee *à discretion*. We had milk and butter too, for Joe managed to keep a couple of cows on his little paddock.

It seemed strange to me when I first went to America to drink tea or coffee with every meal; but it is the custom there, and you hardly ever see an American or Canadian drink beer or wine with his dinner. All their libations of that sort are taken at the 'bar,' probably out of respect to the ladies; for it is considered a heinous offence against public morals that a lady should be anything but a teetotaller. I

am afraid this idea tends to more cupboard-practice than is good, for it is undoubtedly a bad thing to excite a woman's curiosity by placing a taboo on a thing she would not be likely to abuse if unrestrained. Happily these puritanical notions are now wearing out in the higher circles of American society; in fact, at this time, New York society approaches almost too closely to that of Paris.

After breakfast Pat and I resumed our quest after the wild-fowl, the rest of the party going on a fishing excursion. This time we took with us a dog, a rough-looking beast of Indian breed, and wolf-like aspect, but trained by Joe's perseverance into a capital retriever.

In a little bay we saw a wonderful flock of ducks; the sea was literally black with them for a radius of half a mile. We returned post-haste for an old swivel gun of large bore we had seen in the house, which we intended to use merely to see how many it was possible to kill with one shot. We came again to the spot, and, favoured by a projecting point covered with rushes, we planted the old gun in the bow of the canoe, and fired into the thickest of the birds.

All the enormous flock took flight on the report being heard, and when we counted our spoil, they numbered (of course my readers won't believe me) no less than eighty-three! But then it must be remembered that game is at a great disadvantage in wild

countries, for it is so unacquainted with danger that it suspects nothing, and is an easy prey to the hunter. I have often killed grouse (which in that part of the world lodge in trees) with sticks and stones. One might miss them three or four times without their moving, and when they did move at last, it would only be to fly lazily a few yards to another tree, where the assault was of course renewed till the unhappy birds fell.

The captain and the rest of our party came back with a fine haul of halibut (a very fine fish something resembling turbot) and rock cod, while Joe made his appearance later with a young buck across his shoulders, and the pleasing intelligence that he had met in the forest with the tracks of a herd of elk. After a jolly evening we turned in early in the hope of finding the elk the next morning.

In these hopes we were not disappointed, for Joe and the captain and myself started off, with the three rifles the company possessed, long before daylight, and as dawn appeared we came upon fresh tracks leading towards a little lake some ten miles inland. We had to follow these with great perseverance and caution, as we had no dogs; but after some three hours' scrambling through the bush and skirting cranberry swamps, we suddenly came in view of about fifteen of the splendid creatures browsing in a pleasant little space bordering the lake.

The wood enclosed this space in a semi-circle, so the captain went off in one direction by the edge of the woods, and I in the opposite, Joe remaining where we first stopped. When the captain and I had reached our respective stations, we all three advanced towards the herd with the certainty of getting a close shot, unless they took to the water before we got there.

Soon the herd saw us, and lifting up their noble heads sniffed the air and formed a close phalanx; then the leader burst forth, and they all flew off close along the margin of the lake in the direction where I was standing. When well within shot I fired, and the leader fell. At this the rest of the herd stopped short with a bewildered air, until, scenting the blood of their fallen companion, they became aware of a danger they had not realised before, and turning sharp round, fled back the way they had come. Joe and the captain now closed in, and seeing themselves encircled the creatures plunged into the lake, but too late to prevent two of their number falling beneath our rifles

We didn't at all know how to get our game home for some time, till Joe remembered the little stream running past his house, and which he thought headed out of this lake. On exploration this proved to be correct, and with the aid of a hatchet we carried we formed a raft and a couple of rough paddles. The raft we fastened with withes from the banks of the lake, and then we placed our burdens on it, and with

paddles and poles got it round to the spot where the little stream flowed out. After great labour we got a couple of miles down the stream, which was very swift and rocky, and as night was approaching we walked off through the woods, blazing the trees with the hatchet as we went along, so that we might return next day to the spot without difficulty.

The following morning we pressed all the party into the service, and got our load safely home. One of the elk we kept for Joe's household, and his wife set to work to cure the hams; the other two we put in a canoe and took back to New Westminster, where we sold them for thirty dollars apiece, the horns being valuable trophies, together with a number of the ducks Pat and I had shot, for which we obtained eighteen-pence a brace. From this it may be seen that hunting is not bad even as a pecuniary speculation in that part.

For a fortnight we continued enjoying this delightful life, hunting, fishing, shooting, and sailing, till our restless spirits began to get chafed once more, and we determined (with the exception of Joe) to go on a little exploring expedition, in search of the precious metals, to the head waters of the Squawmish river, which falls into the Gulf of Georgia at Burrard's Inlet, near the mouth of the Fraser. This spot had not hitherto been visited by any white men, and the Indians were reported to be of anything but a friendly disposition, so that we expected some little excitement.

After laying in a fortnight's provisions, getting a few mining tools, and replenishing our stock of ammunition, we obtained the services of a Squawmish Indian, who had lived some time at New Westminster, as a guide, and embarked in a good-sized Indian canoe.

We had very strong weather at starting, which tested the sea-going capabilities of our canoe to the utmost as we crossed the mouth of Burrard Inlet, some eight miles wide; but she rode over the waves like a duck, and beyond getting well drenched with spray we came to no harm. We then entered a splendid salt-water lake, or estuary, some forty miles in length, emptying into Burrard's Inlet; at the head of this estuary was the Squawmish River, our destination.

We paddled on steadily all the rest of the day in a drizzling rain, for some thirty miles up the estuary, and finding a stream of fresh water coming down the hills we spread our tent and camped for the night, taking turns to watch every two hours, as we were now in a doubtful country.

All was quiet during the night; we had in fact seen no Indians since entering the lake, as nearly the whole of them were away at the 'big salt water,' getting in a supply of fish for the approaching winter season, so our fears on that score were considerably allayed. Next day we travelled on and reached the mouth of the river before noon. We made for what appeared to be the largest of several mouths of the stream, and

ascended it for some four or five miles through low-lying delta without much difficulty.

Here, however, the river changed its character, and became very swift and rocky. We were now getting into the heart of the Cascade range, and began to look about us for geological signs. A large Indian village, temporarily deserted, was at hand; we took possession of one of the huts for the night, and finding one or two natives, who from age or sickness had been left behind, by the aid of our guide and interpreter we obtained the loan of a couple of much smaller canoes, in which to continue the ascent on the morrow, our own being much too large and heavy for the strong and shallow water we had to encounter.

Transferring our effects to the smaller canoes we pursued our way, stopping now and again to test a bar in the river for gold. We found it in very small quantities, nothing like sufficient to pay for working, and the general appearance of the country and its mountains did not argue the presence of that metal in the beds of the streams. There were strong indications of copper, lead, and silver, the principal rock formation observable being limestone; there was also much quartz, the matrix of gold, but in too highly crystallised a state to allow a hope of any of its buried treasures having been washed from it. We looked in vain for the decomposed slate, which is the best index for finding the king of metals. Coal was frequently met with,

and if ever the undoubted mineral wealth of this place be brought to light and worked, nature seems to have provided every requisite for assisting in its development; the greatest advantage, as every mercantile mind will appreciate, being that of ready communication by water with the sea-coast.

For two or three days we kept on, often progressing with much difficulty, till the river was no longer possible of navigation in any shape. We then pitched our tent, and left two of our number in charge; while the captain, Pat, and I, put our blankets and three or four days' provisions on our backs, and started off to finish our exploration on foot, with our guide. We kept up our prospecting for gold on the way, obtaining rather better results as we got higher in the mountains.

At the end of the second day we reached the head waters of the river, in a high pass through the middle of the range; and looked down on the other side upon the chain of lesser hills shutting in the Fraser River at Lillooet, some two hundred and thirty miles from its mouth. The mountains here bore the strongest evidence of their mineral wealth, being riddled with veins of quartz and copper, lead and iron ore, whilst in the bottom of the stream we found many pieces of native copper. At this point there was an Indian village, with one or two old men and squaws in it; but they were of a different tribe from our guide, and although

neighbours, understood but very little of his language. They had never seen white men before, yet they had heard much of them, and looked at us with much surprise mingled with suspicion.

We gave them some tobacco and a loaf of bread, which made them regard us with much more satisfaction, and they managed to enquire from our guide what the white people wanted there. He replied by pointing to the mountains and to some specimens of ore that we had, laughing much and tapping his forehead, as if to intimate that we were harmless lunatics. On seeing this, a very old Indian, who seemed to be the chief of the tribe, went into his hut, and produced a little box, full of fresh chipped pieces of quartz, covered on the outside with bright-shining yellow iron pyrites. This substance he evidently thought was gold, the white man's idol; and indeed I have known many besides Indians deceived in the same way. I looked at these specimens with great interest, for at the first sight I had detected that many of the pieces of quartz enclosed fragments of silver ore, exactly similar in appearance to the richest veins in Washoe and Idaho territories.

I tried hard to obtain some of these specimens to take back with us to be assayed, but the owner's cupidity was too great; the more I offered to barter for them, the more he suspected the value of the commodity the white man was so anxious to purchase. I

tried by signs to get him to show me the place in the mountains from which they had been obtained, but he would give no more than a general sweep of his arm all round the country, and at last, on being further pressed, subsided into the customary Indian stolidity, from which nothing could move him; so, our provisions beginning to get low, we had to return without gaining anything but the knowledge of the infinite wealth there was waiting in store for some enterprising seeker, centuries hence perhaps.

We got back the next night, after a hard day's march, to our two companions with the canoes, and were glad of a day's rest; for we had been wet through, and had slept in wet blankets for the three preceding nights. So hardened does the frame become, however, by constant exposure, that none of us felt any the worse.

We now made haste to return to New Westminster; taking with us one of the small canoes, which we purchased. Near the mouth of the river, on the side of a steep hill, we shot a mountain sheep, which is a very rare animal, of peculiar appearance. It looks more like a goat with very long hair than a sheep, except that its horns resemble those of an English ram.

In another two days we reached our first camping-place in the estuary. We came in at dark, hoping that we had been unobserved by a large camp of Indians, whose fires we saw across the lake, some five miles wide at this point. Late in the evening, after

cooking our supper by the aid of a small fire, lighted behind some rocks to screen it from the view of our neighbours, we suddenly missed our Indian guide; and on making search we found that he had made off with the small canoe, and a good quantity of our provisions. Luckily all our fire-arms and the paddles were in the tent, guarded by the constant presence of one of us, or the rascal would doubtless have taken our means both of defence and escape from us.

We had no doubt that he meant joining the other Indians, and that they would probably on receiving his information attack us for purposes of plunder; murdering us if they could to save unpleasant consequences, and with the knowledge that they would be safe from pursuit in the inaccessible passes of the mountains we had quitted. On looking keenly across the surface of the water, we descried the traitor about half way across, and knew of course that it was too late to give chase. With all expedition therefore we struck our tent, packed everything into the larger canoe, and paddled off in the middle of the night till we were within ten miles of the mouth of the estuary; when, utterly wearied out, we ran the canoe ashore and fell asleep; leaving one to keep watch for an hour in turn until day.

Soon after daylight I woke, and looking back saw an unpleasant spectacle. About ten canoes were coming towards us as rapidly as they could, and were

within a mile of us. Our look-out had fallen asleep, worn out I suppose, and had nearly done for us all. I soon roused everybody, and as a fresh puff of wind favoured us, we hoisted our sail and paddled off as hard as we knew how. Our canoe was large and heavy though, and we had not enough men to impel her as fast as our pursuers came. Ahead of us we could see the mouth of the estuary, with a tremendous sea running; too heavy, we feared, to live through.

It was now a race between us for the open sea at the mouth; we did not expect the Indians would follow us there, as their canoes were smaller than ours, and consequently still less likely to weather the storm, in braving which lay our only chance of escape. In the consciousness of this we struggled manfully, forgetting our previous exertions and want of rest, but it became painfully apparent at length that we should be caught up with before we could get out in the open. We began to despair, and to curse the unlucky man who had fallen asleep on his watch, till the captain brought us to our senses by swearing he would shoot the first man who 'left off work to take to growling.'

'Yu bet, boys,' said he, 'we'll fix them 'tarnal skunks yet! Only keep a good grit, and ef we can pick off one er tu of 'em fust, maybe it'll scare the whole bilin' of 'em right off. But ef yer goin' to quirrel like a lot o' squaws, we'd better sell out our chaances to onst!' At this juncture we were about

three miles from the outlet, and the nearest canoe was within four hundred yards. In it we recognised our runaway guide. The captain handed me the steering paddle, and carefully inspected the priming of his Sharp's rifle; directing two others of the party to load two more rifles at the same time. The wind freshened as we neared the sea, and there was too much motion to enable a steady aim to be taken at the distance we then were from the Indians.

'Naow,' said the captain to me, 'when I say the word, jes yu bring her head roun' inter the wind, an' that'll surprise our friends some. They won't be able to stop 'emsels so sudden,' and I'll try ter put a bit o' lead inter the carcass o' that Mr. Squawmish Jack; aafter that we must cut an' run agin, ef we ken.'

The increasing wind had brought the foremost canoe a good way ahead of its fellows, as it carried a larger sail. In about five minutes, when everything was ready, the captain said quietly to me, 'Naow Dick!' and I brought our craft up dead in the wind (not without some danger of capsizing). Three reports followed, and afterwards the whirr of the rifle bullets, and I saw Squawmish Jack fall into the bottom of the canoe, with a full reward for his treachery; while the steersman, wounded in the arm, dropped his paddle and the sheet of the sail at the same time; and the canoe, getting broadside on to the waves, filled and sunk.

This was our salvation, for the rest of the canoes gave up the chase to pick up their comrades, all being rescued but Squawmish Jack, who had probably been shot dead, for he never rose again to the surface. We made the best use of our time, and getting under the lee-side of one of the headlands at the mouth of the estuary, sailed out into the gulf. There was no chance of making the Fraser River, so we headed straight across the gulf for Plumper's Pass, a channel between two islands, in the direct route from New Westminster to Victoria, and got safely across in spite of the elements.

We found a gun-boat anchored here, and told the officers of the outrage ; they promised to send a couple of boats' crews in pursuit of the Indians, but we learned afterwards that owing to stress of weather they could not do so until it was too late to be of any avail.

We rested a day or two in the Pass, and determined to proceed at once to Victoria, without returning to New Westminster, and to adopt the former town as a place of residence for the winter. We reached the harbour of Victoria without further mishap, and were not sorry after our little bout to be once more within the domain of ordinary society.

CHAPTER XII.

WINTERING IN VICTORIA.

Victoria was wonderfully changed for the better since we had last left it. The pretty little town was now filled with some ten thousand or more inhabitants, and was beginning to grow into an extensive place. Huge hotels were springing up to feed and house the roving hordes of gold-seekers. Banks, assaying offices, warehouses, and even churches, appeared in unexpected locations. Particularly, to my intense chagrin, I observed a party of miners quarrying away into the rocks composing those 'town lots' my legal friend had tried to persuade me to purchase on my first visit here, making foundations for some large storehouses. The suburbs were opening out in all directions, under the auspices of miners and others with sufficient means to buy a lot, and to build a house or log-hut on it to live in through the winter.

But I saw other sights which did not please me, and filled me with some trepidation. Thousands of men, without means or work to do, were hanging about the bar-rooms or their little one-roomed shanties, sponging on the first acquaintance any better off than them-

selves for a meal. In my walk down Government Street I was 'tapped' on no less than four separate occasions for 'haaf a dollar.' This made me look at my own slender finances with troubled thoughts, for, without the chance of earning anything, I could not hold out very long.

I met lots of my old shipmates and acquaintances, and the changes of fortune that had befallen them were strange indeed, varying from the ludicrous to the sad. My original partner I found 'keeping bar' in a whiskey saloon of decidedly second-rate character; his person adorned with a 'biled' shirt of questionable cleanliness, and many sham diamonds. He had not much of interest to narrate. His first experience in the labour market had been the common one of road-making. His next employment was to dig potatoes for a wealthy 'gentleman of colour,' who had amassed his riches as a drayman, aided by judicious speculation in town lots. This occupation I thought (with my social ideas becoming fast Americanized) to be very low down indeed; but my friend appeased my disgust by stating that nothing less than impending starvation had driven him into it. Finally, he had happened upon his present berth, which seemed to suit him sufficiently well.

Going into a restaurant of humble character to obtain a 'square feed' at fifty cents, I was waited upon (deuced badly too) by a young man of gentle-

manly appearance, in whom I recognised a quondam associate and first-class through passenger, who had taken his degree at Oxford the year before, but had been allured from his intended profession, the Church, by the British Columbia excitement. The poor fellow seemed dreadfully down, and did not recognise me till I made myself known, when we had a talk together, and he informed me that his employer was a sort of steward's mate, who had worked his way out, and whom we had all kicked and cuffed about the steamer.

In the evening, visiting for an hour a place of entertainment, which was a dim reflection of a London Music Hall, I was filled with surprise to see in the person of a singer a lady of the most superior attainments and connections, who had accompanied her husband with the view on his part, as we all understood, of taking up a large tract of land and raising stock. But the husband had taken to drink instead, and squandered his money, and the wife was what I saw her; and that, alas! was only a cloak for a viler life. It was no pleasant spectacle to see this poor creature—who, whatever she might be now, had once been a lady, and a virtuous wife—drinking champagne, after her singing was concluded, at a public bar, with ruffians in mufti, whose ordinary conversation was blasphemy, and whose assumed manners fitted them as ill as the 'store clothes' they wore. Some exception in this respect might be made in favour of one or two

professional gamblers, whose greater proficiency in the arts of the *beau monde* had been gained at the expense of their moral perceptions of the principles of *meum* and *tuum*. Well, I thought, surely this poor sinner meets with her punishment in this life, and may not be hardly dealt with in the next! With a saddened heart I went to rest that night.

A few days after, Pat, who had been staying with me, went off to one of the logging-camps at the saw-mills across Puget Sound, to ply his former vocation of cook for the winter; and in order to husband my resources, I took a small shanty in a back slum, and laid in a stock of provisions for a month, with the intention of doing anything that turned up, and raising sufficient money, if possible, to take me back to my claim on Jack of Clubs Creek in early summer.

I often think of that time now with sentiments of wonder, how we all got through it; and I must confess that I recognised and thanked the helping hand of Providence more then than I have done since in better days. When those two months and another one were gone, nothing was left to me but a pair of blankets, too old and rotten to fetch anything, and the clothes I stood in, which were getting very ragged, and anything but impervious to the cold. My toes had worked perforated patterns in my only pair of boots, and I suffered from a general absence of underclothing, money, and food. With five thousand destitute men

thrown on the town for their livelihood through the winter, the chances for each individual unit were small enough. Still, although at this period I generally coiled up at night in my blankets without the knowledge of where breakfast was coming from in the morning, I managed to exist without sponging on my neighbours, or partaking of the Colonial hospitality through the kind permission of the police magistrate.

Once an Australian nicknamed Bob Ridley (whom I afterwards heard was an old 'lag,' or convict) induced me to join him in a little contract for clearing a suburban lot. We had to take it at a very low price on account of the competition there was to obtain it; but we expected to make fair wages for about a month's labour. My companion obtained an advance of provisions for a fortnight from our employer, and we worked like a couple of slaves while that lasted, chopping, rolling logs, burning them, and grubbing out the stumps; living in a perpetual atmosphere of wood-smoke, and dust, and looking such begrimed savages that our very mothers would not have known us.

In the third week I noticed my new partner began to shirk his work a little, and one morning he started for town to get some more provisions. He came back late at night, dead drunk, and with only about a couple of days' provisions. Exasperated at this, for I had been hard at work from daylight till dark, and had had no

supper, I remonstrated with Mr. Bob; but he only became truculent, and swearing he'd have my life, made at me with an American axe uplifted, the bright edge of which I had just time to see by the dying light of one of our fires, and to grasp a pickaxe, with which I stopped the blow aimed at my head. Quickly disarming the scoundrel (luckily he was a smaller man than I, and not sober), I bore him to the ground, and inflicted upon him with my boot a chastisement which the rules of the ring would hardly warrant, but which was, I think it will be admitted, lenient enough under the circumstances. Not caring to pass the rest of the night in such charming society, I shouldered my blankets, the tools, and one half of the provisions, and marched into the town. In the morning I ascertained that Ridley had got all the money due on the contract out of our employer, and had spent it, so I was fairly on my beam-ends again.

But at last it became hard times indeed with me. I had reached the end of the third day without a morsel of food having passed my lips, and was walking the streets in no cheerful frame of mind, when I passed a French restaurant, in the window of which, temptingly displayed upon snowy napkins, were many dainties of an enviable nature, and a bill of fare giving promise of the many good things to be got within. I was fascinated by this window, and began to revolve in my mind what chances there were of filling the unsatis-

factory void that existed in my internal regions. Should I go straight up to that fat little sleek Frenchman, address him in the best of his language that I could command, represent my condition, and ask him to trust me for a meal? Another glance at the man revealed the hopelessness of such an application. Perfect civility, a huge shrug of the shoulders, and a cold stern refusal, would be the reply. Should I, on the other hand, boldly take my seat, eat and drink my fill, and swagger up to that little counter, with my hat cocked in full rowdy style, and confront that little Frenchman with the remark, 'Waal, mossoo, I guess you'll hev to charge that meal to my 'count; I'm broke!' and so leave the premises? Even if a pitched battle arose, I could but receive my farewell kick; which I could stand comfortably enough with my weight in the quarter where the kick would be received better balanced by a full stomach. No dread consequences of another nature could ensue; the transaction was but a simple contract debt.

So my mind was agitated for some time, but not made up; for my pluck was oozing away with my physical strength, my eyes gloating over the spread meanwhile; till I saw the host inside begin to peer through the window at me with glances of suspicion. Knowing then that my game, if played at all, must be played at once, and with boldness, I had placed my hand upon the door-handle, and was about to turn it,

when I felt a heavy slap on the shoulder. Turning round sharply, my heart gave a bound of delight, for I saw my old friend the Captain, of Fraser River memory.

'Waal, young Johnny Bull, what air you standing fixed at that winder for, like a bump on a log? Come and take a drink!' said he.

I did. 'Another?' 'You bet!' I replied, determined to get liquid refreshment if I couldn't get solid.

'Now, s'pose we hev some supper at that little Frenchman's yu was lookin' at 'while ago. The trip down on that steamboat's made me kind of wolfish.'

Of course I acquiesced.

The bill of fare was a puzzler to the captain, who protested vehemently against 'them tarnation French fixins,' and told me to 'palaver a proper square feed out o' that darned frog-eater, and not to forget the buckwheat cakes!'

I met the Captain's wishes with little difficulty, and proceeded to satisfy my own desires with so much practical application that there was little time for talking between us; but when my companion had concluded his part of the repast, and had picked his teeth and expectorated contemplatively for some quarter of an hour, seeing me still devouring ravenously, he concentrated his faculties of observation upon me, and remarked:—

'Why, Dick, old hoss', you seem sort'er hungry, an'

now I notice it, them clothes o' yourn 'pear to be a trifle played out. Hev the times bin rough with yer lately?'

I explained that this was my first meal for three days, in spite of all my endeavours and struggles to earn one.

He leaped up: 'An' they call 'emselves white men in these parts, du they? Here,' said he, diving into his trousers pocket, 'take that, my son, and pay me back agin when you're well off!'

So saying, he threw on the table a big shining twenty-dollar gold piece, with a flush on his good honest Yankee face, and something like an oath or two on his lips. My eyes had a weakness about that time that they hadn't exhibited since at the age of eight I was spanked by my schoolmistress; they involuntarily moistened as I wrung the noble fellow's hand who had thus twice saved me from the direst straits of poverty.

The captain was off again to the Fraser next morning, and left me with all sorts of good wishes and hopes that I should join him in a few more trips through the *cañons*. His loan was of wondrous service to me, for it enabled me to hold my head above water till I got employment as a brewer's drayman. This post I held comfortably enough till, driving home late at night over a rough cross-country track, I was pitched off the summit of my load to the ground and broke my arm.

On getting over this reverse I gained an unexpected promotion in the shape of a berth as assistant in an assayer's office, for which position I deemed myself fully qualified, according to a colonial standard, by having made trifling chemical experiments in the kitchen at home, to the terror of the servant-girls, and by having once nearly suffocated an usher at school with a jar of chlorine gas surreptitiously introduced into his reading-desk, and dexterously overturned at the right moment by a piece of string.

I found my new work very pleasant after my rough experiences, the only drawback being the sensations of envy created by the piles of gold dust brought in by luckier mortals than myself, to be melted down by my agency into shining bars, with their value tested and stamped on the outside. The pay being good I was enabled to wear good clothes, and to put up at a fashionable boarding-house, on Yates Street, kept by Mrs. Meekins and her daughter Angelina.

Mrs. Meekins was the widow of the captain of a New England whaler, who had died some time since at Honolulu deeply in debt, and she and her daughter had met with many vicissitudes since then, until they had settled into their present haven. Owing to this, her temper was of a somewhat vinegary nature, and her habits regarding pecuniary matters of a tenacious character.

Angelina was a pretty girl; but most of my readers

have read that capital book 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.' In that little work the hostess and her daughter are so closely described that I have often been inclined to think, if it were possible for the world to be unaware of the movements of such a man as Oliver Wendell Holmes for even a short time, he must have paid a visit to Victoria to take Mrs. and Miss Meekins for his models.

So scarce was female society, however, that the fair Angelina, despite such drawbacks as are inherent to an uneducated Miss, was the centre of attraction, not only to our boarders but to many of the outer barbarians, who, from lack of room, could gain no admission within the pale of our little community. The prototypes of many of Mr. Holmes' characters were there too: three or four very fair likenesses of 'that young man John,' a 'Koh-i-noor' or two, and a young Presbyterian divine of ultra fire-and-brimstone principles. But, alas! there was no fair young 'schoolmarm,' and no professor to keep us in order.

I believe a young bank-clerk and myself ran the principal race for Angelina's favour for some time; but I finally gained a signal victory over my rival by pulling up a pair of horses, which, under Angelina's management, were running away with us in a buggy on the Beacon Hill Course. I luckily succeeded in checking the mad career of these wild steeds of the prairie (hired for the occasion at the extravagant

outlay of ten dollars) within about fifty yards of the edge of the cliff, and the yielding Angelina seized the occasion to fall upon my breast, and utter sentiments which could not be misunderstood, ere she adopted the ordinary feminine course of fainting.

But my only love romance out West was nipped in the bud: for that very day, as ill luck would have it, while I was absent from his office, my employer took a fancy that he had a better right to certain gold bars than the man who had left with him the 'dust' that composed them the day before, and accordingly took passage to San Francisco (with the said gold bars) upon the steamer, the blue smoke of which I had pointed out to Angelina on our return home, when her consciousness had revived. My employer also left me a creditor for the amount of two months' salary.

Mrs. Meekins was 'very grieved, but her house was high-toned. She was afeard my conneckshin with Mr. —— might be offensive to her boarders. She had noticed a sartin amount of familiarity with her dorter that she didn't quite approve, and as she had other views for Miss Angelina, would I ——?' Yes I would, and did leave in a huff, after many tears and vows from Angelina.

Spring had now set in, and on transferring my effects from Mrs. Meekins' to an establishment of less pretensions, I observed the advertisement of a coming regatta. This I regarded as an opportune chance, and

determined to avail myself of it; so I looked up a young fellow whom I had rowed with two or three times, and we entered ourselves for all the pairs and the sculling races. After a week's hard training we confidently felt ourselves 'fit' against any opponents we were likely to encounter.

The auspicious day arrived—a pleasant bright one—and we surveyed the course with feelings of hope tinged with apprehension, for on our success depended the chance of getting up the country again to our claims at the mines, which would otherwise be forfeited or 'jumped.' The course extended from a bridge crossing part of the harbour out round a small island and back, a distance of about two miles, and as we had three races before us our work was cut out for that day.

Our first race was a pair-oared one, and there was only one crew against us—a couple of hardy watermen from the neighbouring harbour of Esquimalt, whom we did not hold in much awe after the first half-mile, that being about the distance they were accustomed to pull to the men-of-war in the harbour, and then to reward their previous exertions by copious draughts of beer.

The spectators evidently thought differently from ourselves, and judged it nothing less than effrontery in a couple of striplings to engage with men half as heavy again as themselves, and, as they imagined,

better up to the work. Particularly the American lookers-on (who were probably the worst judges in such a matter) favoured us with considerable chaff, and when we asked them to back their opinions did so freely, laying odds of from three to five to one against us. These we took to the full extent of our limited finances, and had a very pretty book by the time we were ready to start.

The race, as we only had expected, was a very hollow affair. Our adversaries started off at a great burst, thinking to have it all their own way, and left us a long way behind in the first half-mile; but at the island they were completely winded, and we passed them easily, rowing home many lengths ahead, to the great surprise of the betting-men.

The next was a sculler's race, in which four were entered. I made the running for my friend, who came in at the end an easy winner. The last was a two-pair sculling race, for which we walked over, as no one cared to oppose us; and thus, to our great delight, we netted sufficient in the day to take us up to the mines, and give us a fair start again.

I wrote to Pat to come over; and, our other partners in mining industry being ready, we all started again together for another venture at Jack of Clubs Creek.

I had a stolen farewell interview with Angelina, when many promises were exchanged; but the banker's clerk was too many for me while I was away. With the

aid of the *intriguante* mamma he induced the girl to marry him a month afterwards. Poor thing! he made her a bad husband, took to drinking, and beat her, and wound up by running off with an actress.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER TURN AT THE MINES.

Locomotion was easier this year than the last. We had less encumbrance, no mules, no provisions, less personal effects, and less money, unfortunately; but we had gained considerable experience, and were inured to hard work.

The Colonial Government had turned all its energies and resources towards the formation of a trunk-road from the head of navigation to the mines, and the work was proceeding vigorously. We passed some hundreds of men in road camps at different points; and, being too early by about a month for regular mining operations, we allowed ourselves to be persuaded to lend our services to the country for that period, and engaged with one of the contractors.

The reader will have little idea of what one of these road camps is like, if he has not visited a new country. Emerging suddenly from a narrow trail through the woods, one comes upon a little temporary settlement of one's fellow-bipeds. It is dinner-time, perhaps, and the ear is assailed by the clatter of many knives and forks and spoons upon tin plates, while the omnipre-

sent odour of the inevitable beans and bacon makes itself known to the nostrils. From a huge log fire two or three cooks are bearing gigantic pans, full of this homely but substantial diet, to the expectant heroes of the axe and shovel, who stand at long benches in rows, very like pigs waiting at a trough. Their ravenous anxiety is evinced by an angry silence, unbroken save by occasional objurgation at the delay, until the repast is spread; when a free fight with cups, plates, spoons, and forks, arises for the first chance at what comes nearest. Still no talking is heard, all are too busy; nothing but the incessant clatter that marks the stupendous process of demolition that is going on. In a quarter of an hour the human voice begins to assert itself; as the rude tables become deserted, their occupants rush off like a herd of cattle to the little stream that comes tumbling past from the steep mountain side, and refresh themselves with deep draughts of the cool waters; after which revivifying process their pent-up tongues renew their natural functions. Pipes are lit, and the men betake themselves in little groups to the shade of the picturesque assemblage of white tents peeping out of the surrounding woods, and stretching themselves on their beds of pine boughs, proceed to dreamy conversation, under the soothing influence of tobacco, until that dreadful gong summons them again to their toil. Then, at the close of day, the table scene is repeated—with less violence,

for there is more time to spare—and the same groups congregate again together to pass away the evening till sleep overcomes their willing eyelids. Sometimes, but rarely, the glimmer of a candle may be seen through the canvas of a tent, where some gambler in distressed circumstances holds his nightly *levée*, regretting the smallness of the stakes he plucks from his companions, or where some better-occupied individual is laboriously editing an epistle to the loved ones thousands of miles away. At length the candle is extinguished, the last spark leaps out of the log-fire, and the little camp is still—stiller than surrounding nature, which has seemed so still all day; for now the beavers are busy at their little dam just up the stream; and you may almost hear their teeth gnawing away at the pine-tree, which they will fell as surely though more slowly than the hardy Canadian who sleeps close by; the martin and the mink scream and chatter in the woods; the hungry wolf prowls near the little settlement; the bear shuffles forth from his den, and his growl is answered by an under-breathed one from the sleepy watch-dog, whose dream over the ashes of the fire has been disturbed by his ursine neighbour.

There are three grades of men employed; choppers, who are the pioneers, cut down the trees in the line of road, and fill up ravines with crib-work built of logs, or build log bridges over the streams; graders, who

follow the choppers, with pick and shovel, grub out the stumps of the trees, and dig away or fill up the soil; and the blasters, who are a special class, generally Cornish or Welshmen, who assault the rocks, where they are in the way, with drill and sledge hammer, and quickly demolish them afterwards with gunpowder. But the first two classes are made up of all sorts of men, from the escaped convict, or ticket-of-leave man, to the son of the wealthy English commoner, or New York merchant.

Pat and I thought ourselves qualified by previous use of the axe for engagement with the choppers, a much cleaner and more pleasant employment than that of the graders. We worked away comfortably enough for a month, and at the end of that time the nature of our labours had placed us some thirty miles further on our road. Our other partners in the claim stayed to work at a farm for another month, while we pushed on to Cariboo to look up old Jake, and open our summer campaign.

When we got into the Cariboo country it was about the middle of May; but the snow was still lying deep on the mountains, and we had to provide ourselves with snow shoes in order to reach our old abode on Jack o' Clubs, as no trail had been beaten over the snow. Arrived here, we found old Jake, encompassed by a most unpleasant stench, dressing martin skins, of which he had obtained a good many during the winter. The

old fellow seemed as happy as a bird in his solitude, and when we asked him how he had spent his winter, replied :

'Oh, I've had a gran' time of it, boys, though I'm glad to see yer agin, fur the on'y live things I've seen these two months has been these critters' (the martins) 'an' a cariboo' (a kind of elk from which the district takes its name) 'that I shot while ago. I sold his antlers (they was near six feet across) to Martin at the saloon over thar' (pointing to William's Creek) 'fur thirty dollars.'

'And have you been shut up here by yourself all the winter, Jake?'

'Waal mostly, 'cept when I've been over to the Crik fur provisions, an' I had a big drunk them times to keep out the water through the summer. Come pretty near bein' friz up one night, had my big toe kinder sore ever since. Heerd aafterwards from Doc Brown that the merk'ry were friz up in that glaas fixin' o' his 'shard 's a rock fur three days. That was cold, yu bet! 'Nother time, when I was over to the Crik, we hed some rare games, Martin guv' a ball down to the saloon thar, an' all the boys roun' 'tended o' course.'

'And what did you do for ladies, then?'

'Oh, why we didn't hev none, 'cept old nigger Mary' (a fat negress who did washing for the miners) 'an' the French madam, an' the blacksmith's wife. But we daanced some, I tell yu! It were stag dancin' of

course, fur a hundred an' fifty men was too many fur three females, but it all came off gay, till some reg'lar skunk went an' put croton ile in the pastry, an' then I reckon aafter supper some of us was a bit queer fur a while.'

'I suppose there's nothing turned up about the claim,' I remarked; 'I saw the shaft was full of water, and frozen up, as I came by.'

'Oh, I've got suthin' to show yer, and to tell yer, about that, boys. Look here now! what d'ye yer say to them?' and Jake showed us some nice pieces of gold, weighing altogether a couple of ounces perhaps.

We eyed our maiden treasures with delight. This was the first gold that had come out of our ground, and we were as proud of it as a mother of her first baby.

'An' do yu know,' Jake continued, 'that them specimens purty near cost me my life?'

'How?' we enquired wonderingly.

'Waal, it was this way. Aafter you'd all cleared out laast fall, an' I was a-getting my traps ready fur settin', I took a notion one day, 'fore the frost set in, that I'd like to put the hole a bit deeper down in the shaaft thar'. So I turned the water on to the wheel agin, an' pumped the shaaft out dry; but nat'rally I couldn't get down it an' up agin 'thout somebody at the win'lass. I went over to William's Creek next day, an' foun' a feller loafin' about the saloon, sawin' up some wood to 'arn his grub; so I offered him a week's board

to come over an' help me a bit. He seemed pleased to come, an' we got over here just about dark. Aafter supper we sat smokin', an' got a-talkin' about the country gen'rally, and this claim in partik'lar. He seemed mighty curious, an' asked me a heap o' questions; such as how many there was in the claim, when the rest 'ud come back, an' so on; he looked roun' the place rather strange-like too, and seemed to take stock of everything. But I didn't take no notice of this then.

'Nex' mornin' we got the shaaft quite dry, I got into the bucket, an' he let me down by the win'lass, with a pick an' shovel. I dug down about three feet, and sent up the dirt in the bucket every now and then as I went on. Then the stuff got very hard, an' my pick struck agin a bit o' soft rock. I cleared the dirt away an' scraped about the rock with my old jack knife; an' then I picked out them pieces o' gold, and guv' a short bit of a shout-like when I foun' 'em, for the sight pleased me some. "Struck it at last by thunder!" says I. All of a heap suthin' struck me unpleasant, an' I looked quick up the shaaft. Thar' that man stood, an' I could see his face in the light quite plain, though he couldn't see me much. He was glarin' down at me. with a darned ugly look on him. "Hullo!" I said. "Hullo, yerself," he says. "Jes' haul me up, will yer?"

'"We'll see about that presently," he goes on.

'I swore some, (I caan't help it when I gets excited) but that was no use; so then I laafed as if he was jokin'; an' puttin' them bits in my pocket, I sot down for a piece, tellin' him that I guessed he'd get tired first. But he went away then, an' I didn't like the look o' things a bit.'

'Still, I didn't think he was reg'lar right down raskil enough to leave me thar, wher' I must ha' starved, an' perished; for there was no soul likely to come near the place till you come along in the spring; an' I thought our cabin was too poor fur him to care to rob it. Then I began to think all sorts o' things, p'raps he was mad, more likely he fancied I'd got somethin' considerable hid away in the cabin somewhars, an' was lookin' fur it now. Anyhow, if he meant to leave me down thar, an' he showed himself agin up top, I'd aask him to get my old six-shooter out from the hiding-place over the bunk, whar I kep it, an' shoot me straight, so as to make an end of it. Then I thort I'd like to live a while longer, an' I caast round for a way to get out. The shaaft's all squar' timbered, with nothin' but the little wedges in the corners. I couldn't climb up that way nohow. He'd got the bucket up top, an' if he hadn't I s'pose he'd ha' cut the rope. I thort maybe I might get up with the pick an' the knife, by diggin' one in aafter the other; but if I slipped! it made me shudder all over to dwell on it. However, I didn't see another chaance but to wait till he got away, an' then try it. All this

time the water was tricklin' down, fur he'd turned the water off the wheel, an' the pump was stopped,—thar was some little comfort in that, I should be drowned 'fore I was starved or friz up!

'While I was debatin' about this, the feller came to the shaaft again:

'"Below thar," says he.

'I thought he was goin' to let me out at laast, but when I looked up my heart sickened, for I see he'd got a big pack on his shoulders—all he'd bin able to lay hands on in the shaanty.

'"Yu hound," I hollers up at him, "air you goin' to leave me hyar, to die like a darned Injin coyote?"

'"Good-bye," he answered, "sorry you hain't got a better night's lodgin'," an' he sneered at me.

'I shouted at him, raved, swore, promised him everythin' (meanin' to kill him 'soon 's I got up top) but it was all no use, he walked away. S'pose he was afeard to give me a chaance, an' his head was clear, yu bet!'

'And how, in the name of goodness, did you get out, Jake?'

'Waal, after that feller went away, an' I'd cursed a bit, an' then grown silly, and thort of all the bad things I've done in my time, an' o' what my old mammy used to teach me about the other world, I looked around everything. Of a sudden I saw my way out of it, and felt like to go mad with joy—not so

much even at the idee of savin' my life, as of takin' my revenge upon that scoundrel—thar was the pump! I'd only got to dig my pick through the bottom of the belt into the plank at the side of the shaaft, to hold it faast, an' then I could climb up the elevators.' (The pump in question consisted of a wide leathern belt working round the drum at the top of the shaft on which were fixed, at intervals of two feet, little wooden buckets, which filled and emptied on the principle of a dredging-machine. By making one end of the belt fast, Jake was thus enabled to climb up the buckets or elevators.)

'That was a Jacob's ladder for you in every sense, Jake! And did you catch the murderous wretch after all?'

'You shall hear. I waited till I judged he was out of sight, fur if he'd heerd anythin' he might ha' turned back and cut the belt, and sent me to Old Nick in a minit. An' then I druv' my pick well home through the belt into the timbers, an' climbed up them elevators s' quick 's I knew how. When I got to the top, I threw myself down fur a while, as I was jest about played out. Then I went into the cabin and foun' my old six-shooter all right, aafter which I ate a bit o' victuals. When I'd done, I started off to track my man.

'I follered his tracks to the head of the crik, an' then I seed 'em turn off on the trail to the Forks o'

Quesnelle. I considered a bit whether I should foller him further alone, an' shoot him, or get some more o' the boys to help me ketch him, an' then give him a taste o' Judge Lynch. I thort the laast way the best, an' went to William's Crik an' got haaf a dozen men to come along.

'We soon came on his tracks agin, an' at the end o' ten miles I see him walkin' along under his load. He'd just got up from a rest an' had bin cookin' some of my bacon for a meal, I s'pose, as we passed the remains o' the fire he'd left. When he heerd us coming behind he looked roun', an' seein' us he shied off his pack an' tried to run for it; but we were soon up with him.

'Then he turned sharply round, and fired his derringer at me. The shot grazed my arm and made it bleed a little, but did'nt do no more harm. We didn't give him time to fire agin, but collared him, took his pistol from him and tied up his wrists. Then we took him straight back to the cabin on Jack o' Clubs. I told my story, an' showed the boys the belt faastened to the foot o' the shaaft, an' the man' couldn' deny it. So we tuck him off inter the woods, an' foun' a limb on a spruce-tree that looked convenient, read a chapter out o' the little Bible in the cabin to him (he hadn't taken that, you bet) an' sent him off to his long reckonin'. I guess thar was a heavy balance agin him!

'We all went back to William's Creek, for I didn't care to stop that night in the cabin, close to that dead man; an' in the mornin' two of the boys came back with me, an' they tuk an' buried him at the foot of the big spruce-tree. I'll go with yer and show yer his grave, if yer like.'

We went to the spot, and saw a little mound, with a rude cross over it, and the dead man's name (they had found it on a letter in his possession) carved on a piece of smooth board at the foot of the mound, with the date, 21st December 1862.

Lynch-law is a thing hardly to be upheld, looked at from our own civilised point of view; but harsh and strong measures are necessary in wild countries, where characters such as this man was are too numerous to be pleasant. The rude grave was a saddening spectacle, but we could but concur with old Jake in thinking that the man had died fairly.

The three of us soon started to work to clear away the snow from our claim, and put things in working order; then we got the water-power to work, but found we could not pump the shaft dry till some of our neighbours also started their pumps; so we took axes and saws into the woods, and prepared a quantity of timbers for use underground when we should be able to extend our operations.

By the end of a month our other partners had arrived, and our neighbours got to work, and we

pumped the shaft quite dry. Old Jake had shown his specimens to the storekeepers, and we had already received offers of a couple of thousand pounds apiece for our interests, which we refused, justly enough on seeing the enormous amounts of gold obtained by the miners on William's Creek from claims which had promised less richly than ours.

We forthwith proceeded to deepen the shaft, and open out a tunnel, or drift, from the bottom of it. Then we found that our shaft was only sunk on the side of the rock after all, and that the rock pitched off steeply for a greater depth yet, so there was nothing for it but to sink another. Jake's specimens were only lodged in a little 'pocket' which produced a little more than he had already taken out.

This was disheartening; but we went at it with a will, and soon got down to a depth of sixty feet. Then came a fight with our old enemy, the water; we tried all sorts of experiments, but nothing would subdue it. In it poured through the loose gravel at the bottom in a perfect flood, which no pumps such as we had could keep under.

Our neighbours were in the same plight too; no chance of getting to the bottom, where we *knew* the gold lay studded richly. Truly this was hard; but such is the fate of the gold-miner. All we could do was to give it up till the next season, when we hoped that the roads to the upper country would be made,

and we could bring up steam machinery for a last and powerful effort against the water. How I wished I had taken my two thousand pounds! as I left, after three months' slaving, to make another start at something.

A fresh species of industry next attracted me. As I sallied forth from the unlucky Jack o' Clubs on to the main trail, a pack train was passing. I saluted the owner, a jolly-looking English sailor, who looked a strange figure as he sat across a mule covered with Mexican trappings, striving against nature to hide his merry countenance beneath a huge *sombrero* hat. He wanted an additional hand, one of his Mexicans having got pretty badly slashed with a knife the night before in a drunken *mêlée*, and said he preferred to 'have a countryman of his own to talk to, instead of them "greasers," whose lingo he couldn't get hold of much;' so I gladly took the vacant post.

Not a bad life either was this in the summer time. Up with dawn of day, hunting up the wandering animals; then sitting down with ravenous appetite engendered by exercise to the breakfast (of better fare than we got in the mines) prepared in the meantime by the cook; then saddling and loading the mules, in the midst of the strange oaths and cries of the Mexicans, and the grunts of the quadrupeds as the girths were drawn tightly round them; and then the pleasant ride through wondrous scenery for fifteen

miles or so, seated in a comfortable *demi-pique* saddle, with little to do but to study the charms of nature, and now and then to tighten up a load, or ride off on a hard gallop after some unloaded animal, who had strayed from the rest. The day's journey was generally concluded by two or three o'clock, and after the mules were unloaded, and the stores piled up, nothing remained but to enjoy ourselves; keeping an ear now and then to the tinkle of the bell, so that we should know where to find our animals in the morning. In the evening our chief kept us merry with songs and stories round the fire, and the Mexicans gambled among themselves at *monté* while their money lasted; and at night we rolled our blankets round us, and slept beneath the summer sky, with the stars for company, till they faded out under the beams of the rising sun that aroused us from our slumbers.

So I was sorry when the short summer came quite to an end, and I had to leave my good-hearted employer; who had made enough money to retire on, and get back to England, to settle down and marry, as he told me, his old captain's daughter. Lucky fellow, packing was a better business than mining. He started with a modest capital of five hundred pounds the year before, and left off now with twenty thousand! No such chance as this for me: I had another winter to get through, and a raise to make in readiness for the development of that unfortunate claim on Jack of

Clubs Creek. It wasn't at all clear how a raise was to be made, if times were no better this year than the last, and one couldn't expect a regatta to be got up for one's especial benefit again.

CHAPTER XIV.

'RUSTLING.'

'RUSTLING' is an Americanism, denoting the process of fighting against odds for a living. Such an expression aptly describes the ordinary fortunes of a colonist who has not 'hit his streak of luck,' and that position was strictly my own when I landed at the wharf in Victoria for a second winter's campaign.

Of course there are many stages of rustling; to begin with the lowest, there is the poor devil who labours for a bare subsistence, as I had done in the preceding winter, and who thinks himself lucky enough if he keeps clear of the pangs of hunger, and gets hold of a softer plank than usual to stretch his weary bones upon; then there is the middle-class rustler, who starts a store or whiskey saloon upon credit (thinking it mighty hard if it don't pay), and whom one finds ever and anon displaying his energies in some fresh field of labour, transformed perhaps from an eating-house keeper to a scientific lecturer, or from a Methodist preacher to a gambling-house proprietor. Micawber would have been a great rustler of this type in America. Above all rises the aristocratic rustler,

the merchant of many bankruptcies, the politician of undefined principles, save in 'lobby' business, the man who always lives at the great hotel, is dressed in the height of transatlantic fashion, patronises newspaper editors (by whom he is alluded to as 'our enterprising and highly-gifted resident Mr. So and So'), or heads an exploration at the expense of the Government, and the essence of whose being consists in his keeping what our cousins call 'a stiff upper lip.'

It will be observed that the members of all these bodies start with an equal capital, or rather want of capital. The goods with which the gentleman of the second stage opens his store are other people's; the fine clothes of the aristocrat and his hotel bill are only matters of hope or despair, as the case may be, for the creditor. Success in the profession depends on the assurance and self-assertion of the individual; energy is a quality easily exercised by the man who has nothing to lose. Few rise upwards to eminence from the lowest stage, for hard manual labour has certainly a depressing influence on the ambitious instincts; but many sink into the lowest depth from the middle and upper stages, and when such a catastrophe happens, it may always be set down to a temporary failure in what should be the victim's first principle—*cheek*.

With the recollection of previous hard times before me, I now determined that circumstances should daunt me no longer; I would assert myself as a rustler, and

conquer if I could. So my first step was to invest in some 'store-clothes' of the highest-toned description, and most perfect Yankee cut, and to take up my residence at a somewhat swell hotel. Here I found for fellow-boarders a judge from Washington Territory, an Oregon statesman, a newspaper editor of the town, a British Honourable who had come out to colonise and lose his money, and several nondescripts, principally members of my new profession, I found out.

To get on with Americans a man must be able to talk, and to talk well. No people can catch others with *bunkum* so readily as they, and none are themselves so easily caught by the same means. This is why all sorts of bogus companies and schemes flourish to such an extent over there. It was something wonderful to hear the talking-matches launched by my rivals against the judge and the 'Britisher.' I sat and listened at first, and took many jottings by the wayside to enable me to open out my own line of attack when opportunity offered. I selected the newspaper editor as the means for my personal advancement. I should not be at war with my fellows then, and a rustler should make no enemies if he can avoid it.

I rather liked our 'Honourable' boarder; and he had deigned several times to question me as to the upper country, and to ask my advice on minor points connected with a trip he proposed making. I think our newspaper editor liked him too, or rather would

have been well pleased to get some of his capital invested in the 'Cosmopolitan' (the editor was of course a rustler, though a prosperous one, himself). One morning before breakfast the Honourable and I were taking our cocktail at the bar, and holding a conversation on the general prospects of the country, when we were joined by Mr. Amo. D. Como (so Scriblerius styled himself).

'Swallowin' yer reg'lar pison I perceive, gentlemen? I reckon a cocktail's a institooshin not properly appreciated in the old country, Mister,' he added, turning to my companion.

'Aw well, no; I'm sorwy to confess the infewiowity of Bwitish ideas in that wespect, sir. When I go home again, I intend to take a hogshead of 'em "all weady fixed up" as you'd say, ha, ha!'

'Yes, I s'pose we're some few degrees ahead of the folks to home in mos' things,' I chimed in. 'Look at our newspapers alone, now; why they're near ten times as many as in Great Britain; that shows how much better they are, else people wouldn' read 'em, an' the proprietors (like our frien' here) wouldn' live.'

'Yaas; but the *Times*, you know,' deprecated the Honourable.

'The *Times*,' sneered Mr. Como; 'waal, my ambishin has bin this long while to start a little consarn in that great metrop'lis of yourn, jist a purpose to chaw up that old one-hoss vehicle of antiquated corrupshin you

call the *Times!* I guess if I got a fair start they'd soon hev to sell their laast printin' press to pay their washin' bill; I'd plaaster 'em with the righteous mud of indignashin that thick!'

The Britisher collapsed at this outbreak, which I vehemently applauded, and so earned the immediate friendship of Mr. Como.

'This yer is a promisin' country, sir,' he remarked to me.

'It is, it needs only the aid of journalism to publish its resources and develop 'em,' I said.

'You've travelled over it some, I s'pose?'

'I know 'most every inch of it.'

'And what air your gen'ral impreshins consarnin' it' (on the look out for food for a fresh article on 'Our Resources Internal and Otherwise,' I thought)?

'They're too long to tell 'fore breakfast, Mr. Editor, but I have no objeckshin to contribute a small series of papers to your valu'ble journal if you like. I des'say we can arrange terms.'

'Quite right, stranger, that's a bargin! Don't you sell yer stock for nothin'. I've rustled upwards from a picayune printin' office down to New Orleens, an' I've done it by never givin' nothin' for nothin' ('cept bad advice p'raps); you'll favour me, sir, by steppin' over to the office aafter a while me'bbe, an' we'll set out our programme.'

This was the chance I wanted. Dreams of the magic

letters M. L. A. (Member of the Legislative Assembly, I may inform the uninitiated) appended to my name, when my beard had grown a little, capital stock in mining companies, and other happy tricks of fortune, passed before my mental vision in pleasant array. The Editor and I took breakfast, and had considerable conversation over that pleasant meal; during which I listened to his history, which he narrated with the native pride of an American, who had risen in the world. I wanted him to do this for my own purposes, so that I could be ready when his turn for questioning me came, as it soon did.

'An' now, sir, I've told you my story, let me aask where you were raised.'

'Well, sir, I was raised down East, but I've travelled some, an' ain't got any wooden nutmegs left about me.' I didn't say *how far* East "I was raised," for a betrayal of British origin would have ruined my connection at once.

'Ah, down to Bostin I s'pose; waal, there's smart men comes from them parts, though I'm a Marylander myself, an' don't quite cotton to New England folks as a rule. The fact is, yer see, they rid me on a rail once out that way for abusin' Wendell Phillips.'

After breakfast we walked over to the 'Office,' and entered the Editor's *sanctum*.

'An' what is your perlitical platform, mister?' my friend asked.

'To say the truth, I ain't got any in this settlement to speak of.'

'A good thing too. You shall read a few back numbers, an' you'll soon find what *we* advocate. Never you mind the "Slasher" across the road. I ain't got no prejudice, but that Editor's a most uncompromising scoundrel; I guess I'll have to cowhide him pretty soon. But what's your idees about this war, back in the East; I don't mind tellin' you I'm right down Secesh, so I s'pose we shaan't agree there?'

'You're wrong for once, sir, my sentiments goes entirely with the South. I've seen enough of them cursed Abolitionists. My father was English in his young days, an' a purty game that West India 'mancipation was for him!' All this was true enough, and I got up and held out my hand to Mr. Como, which he grasped warmly.

'Waal now, fust principles bein' satisfactory, I guess we can hitch together well enough. You'll jest write me out a good screamer 'bout the Cariboo country, an' let them cussed fools up to New Westminster have it hot, will yer? I'd take a dozen Injins straight out of the rancherie, an' make a better government out of 'em than they've got up thar.'

I returned to the hotel and penned what I thought might justly be deemed a 'screamer,' suggesting at once the formation of a company to promote the use of steam machinery in the mines; by which I hoped our

claim on Jack of Clubs would benefit, and bullying the New Westminster folk right and left.

Como liked the suggestion of the company well, and said at once, 'Ah, we must have a good pull together at that affair, my friend; but I say, you New England gents are too polished in your langwidge. See here,' showing me an article full of such complimentary epithets as one too often sees reported in the political proceedings at Washington, 'this is the current style of writin' about here. Jes' you touch that production up a little.'

I did, inserting sufficient virulent abuse to gain me a good thrashing I expected, if my identity were discovered; and Como was well pleased this time. My article appeared next morning, and received considerable attention, and I went on with a series of a similar nature.

Soon I was hunted up by a number of merchants and speculators with reference to the 'Cariboo Steam Machinery Company,' and had my name placed upon the direction list; receiving a considerable *honorarium* in the shape of paid-up shares for my exertions as a promoter. I halved the shares with Como for his assistance in placing me on the first step of what I fondly hoped was the ladder to fortune.

I thus passed the winter in high feather, expecting shortly that Como would ask me to join him in partnership. As the spring came round, the share list of the

new scheme was well filled, a large number of steam-engines were imported from San Francisco, and constructed on the spot; and arrangements were made to get them forward to the mines. That was where the shoe pinched, however; the idea was a good one, like thousands of others; but we hadn't taken enough account of the difficulties in the way. First, the Government of the other colony muleted us in almost prohibitive duties—short-sighted souls—then the steamboat owners swindled us; the spring was a late one, and the roads, only made the preceding summer, were blocked in many places by the floods acting on the weak spots passed over by careless Government inspectors.

In fact, when at last our lumbering cargoes reached the mines, it was too late in the season for them to be of the service intended; and the charges we were obliged to make for the use of the engines were too great for the miners to bear. So we had to sell them at a sacrifice, and the company collapsed. I had used interest to get one placed at our claim on Jack of Clubs, but as no other claim there could afford to have one it was of no use alone; and my partners were compelled to go through another season of hard labour with no result.

I had stayed below for that year, paying friend Pat to represent my place in the claim, and was sadly disappointed when he came down in the autumn with the

information that they had been compelled to desert the expected seat of wealth, and had given it up as a bad job.

Como had got very 'riled' over the failure of the company, for it had enabled the opposition 'Slasher' to get the best of him; so he visited his spleen upon me, and discontinued his patronage of my services. The circle at the hotel had broken up; the judge and the statesman had returned to their vocations, the 'Britisher' had gone off on a cattle-buying expedition, in which he was grossly swindled, I learned, by his partner, and returned home afterwards with very unfavourable impressions of our Yankee cousins—let us hope he found consolation in his hogshead of cocktails—and I had to seek again a fresh path of action.

This I found as 'clerk' in a dry goods store (at home in England they call such a personage a counter-jumper). The friend who introduced me to this laughed at my scruples of incompetency.

'But,' I said to him, 'I know nothing at all about it!'

'What does that matter? He' (my proposed employer) 'don't know nothin' about it either. He made his money minin', and has taken it into his head to set up a big store. He's jest married one o' them English gals what was shipped out here, an' I guess he'll be purty well occupied till you get warmed to your work.'

I put a bold face on the matter accordingly, and on

my applying for the vacant post was accepted. In a few weeks' time, when my employer arrived home with his bride, I was able to measure off yards of calico, and sell 'notions' in a way that delighted him and surprised myself. But ill luck seemed to pursue me; nothing stuck to my fingers. I passed through a series of varied employments, till I found myself purser of one of those river steamboats I had often travelled on as a passenger, and which I had helped to unload when boating in canoes with my old friend the captain and his crew. From this post I was one day, to my great delight, promoted to that of captain.

This was the life of all that charmed me; the privilege of command could not fail to be dear to the heart of a youngster, who had by that time borne no mean share of cuffing about the world; while the exciting sense of constant danger suited my ardent temperament. I had seen that nerve and coolness were the great qualities required, and I flattered myself I possessed both.

Well I remember the sense of absolute power I used to feel, as the old boat was almost held still, by some specially 'bad place' in that terrible river—with its furnaces roaring, and its frame quivering throughout, till its decks warped and curled up and down under the full power of its high-pressure machinery! How I knew that one false or careless turn of the wheel would seal the fate of all on board, by letting the current gain the mastery of us, and dash us against the staring and

grimly-beckoning wall of rocks, past which the stream rushed in maddened fury! At such a time, alone in my little glass house, with teeth set, eyes fixed, and chest expanded, ignoring the unseen presence of my fellow mortals below, I felt as if I were the last man fighting a battle with nature, and gaining it. And after this excitement came the pleasant relapse of safety, when my place could be supplied by the mate or a deck-hand, and I could enjoy the convivial society of my passengers and guests, and take pleasure in chatting gaily with the ladies, when I was fortunate enough to have any on board. 'Tis strange how recklessness grows upon us in a short time, for custom begets the power of doing or feeling anything, and how, moreover, a dash of the comic element is apt to be infused in us, at what would seem the most inopportune moments—as the man who is being married, or waiting to be hanged, diverts his attention to the trivial contemplation of the fabric of the minister's garment, or the shape of the hangman's boots—the eddy of absurdity running up beside the full downward-flowing stream of serious life.

I call to mind an instance in support of these two well-defined propositions. One day we were heading at a dangerous 'riffle,' and the river was swollen to such an extent that everyone said we should never get over the place. All steam was clapped on, and the steam-gauge showed some unprecedented figures.

We got to the top of the 'riffle,' where the water changed from rough to smooth, and there we stuck sure enough, not able to advance an inch. After a time I felt it was no use, unless something else could be done by our engineer to get more steam. Then I blew down my pipe to him to ask if nothing could be done.

'No, not a darn' thing!' he shouted up; 'an' if we don't get out o' this purty sudden, we shall all be blown to ——' (a very tropical latitude indeed).

But I determined to see for myself. Blowing down another pipe to my trusty mate, I summoned him to the pilot-house, and directed him to hold the boat's head steady while I went below. Descending to the lower deck I saw that indeed the engineer had done his *possible*, except in one thing—there was the safety valve at the back of the boilers! Round the latter were clustered a group of stolid-looking Indians, greasy and sleepy from the excessive heat. A sudden thought struck me.

'Come,' I said, in his native tongue, to the heaviest and most obtuse-looking of these gentry. He rose, and came to me with an injured grunt.

'You like to be great chief, all the same as me, steamboat chief?' I asked.

'Yes, captain,' he replied, his eyes dilating at a glimpse I allowed him of a five-dollar gold piece.

'Then, very good you sit down on that little iron

thing. Very soon you all see steamboat go up quick.' (I wasn't quite clear in my own mind whether it would 'go up' stream or into the air, but one or the other I was determined on). 'I am great medicine man; presently you all see I speak true.'

Mr. Indian mounted on his seat without another word, and I placed the five-dollar piece in his hand, telling him not to relinquish it; it was a talisman, and the spell would be broken if he did. He sat there clutching tightly his piece of money, with a look of disdainful pride at his comrades, and such an appearance of majesty as a savage alone possesses. Thank God, the boilers were new and sound, and stood the strain! In two minutes we were over, and then I ordered the fires to be almost drawn, and a large quantity of the steam blown off. I made the Indian earn his five-dollar piece by keeping his throne for a long time though, after the danger was over.

He gained from that time the *soubriquet* of 'Safety-valve Jack,' and I gained the full credit from the Indians of being a very great medicine-man indeed.

After this my readers will probably think it lucky for the sake of others I didn't hold my position of steamboat captain long. Lucky or the reverse, the episode made me a considerable favourite in steamboat circles for some time; but my owners becoming suddenly bankrupt, one fine morning as I left my cabin

to step on shore to get breakfast (we had tied up for the night alongside the town wharf), I found my dear old boat in the hands of the sheriff, and thus I was cast adrift once more.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE RUSTLING.

'Well, bad luck sticks in a wonderful way to some people; I thought I had a safe thing to make a fortune at here,' I said aloud to myself, as I stepped ashore.

'That's so, you bet its rough!' a voice replied to me; and turning round I saw my colleague, the engineer. 'Le'ss talk over this bis'ness some,' he continued.

'Naow, look here,' the man of steam commenced, when we had seated ourselves together at breakfast at a retired table in a neighbouring restaurant; 'our boss has been a reg'lar tarnation aass in this affair. I'd a-thort he'd bin a heap smarter man. Why didn't he give you an' me the offis laast night, and we'd ha' whipped the Occidental (the name of our boat) down to Portland, with him aboard of her, an' ha' got clare of all this?'

'I suppose he didn't think that quite honest,' I said, 'and anyhow, it's no use crying for spilt milk. I suppose we've both lost a good bit in the way of arrears of wages. What do you propose to do?

'Why this. To-night we get Mr. Sheriff's man into

your cabin, an' make him blin' drunk ; he takes kindly to pison ; then we slip the lines, an' drop down stream quietly ; there's a clear run of two or three miles. There's a good stock o' wood aboard, an' I'll have an Injin or two ready to fire up. 'Soon as we get below the town lights, we'll lock that unpleasant companion of our'n up in the cabin, and get up the steam, an' make straight to Paget Soun'. Then we'll get some coal, an' pick up another man or two, an' run straight down the coast to Columby River, an' up to Portland, sell the boat there, pay ourselves what's due to us, and send the rest back by our friend the dep'ty sheriff. What d'yer say to that? That's honest enough, ain't it, if yer feel squeamish ?'

'But you know that our boat isn't fit for salt water,' I urged ; 'the first bit of wind 'ud knock us all to pieces in a minute. I don't know the coast a bit, either ; an' we havn't any charts or anything aboard. Besides these people might find an ugly name for a transaction of that sort.'

'Ah, I see, you ain't half the man I took yer to be when you sot that fat Injin on the safety-valve. Ha! ha! that was the rale grit! Well, if you're a-mind to try it, we'll change places. I know the coast well enough by this time. I don't care two cusses what these yer Britishers 'ud say to the bisness—we'd be out of their way pretty sudden, an' I call it a square thing myself: I'm sick of this country anyway, an' so you'd ought to be, I think.'

The proposition was a bold one, savouring slightly of romantic novelty, and as such took my fancy a little. It was not an absolutely dishonourable one either; but was sufficiently characteristic of American ideas of commercial integrity. A little calm reflection showed me, however, that it wouldn't do, and so I told the engineer. He went away grumbling, evidently disappointed at my want of spirit.

I am inclined to think he would have tried his plan by himself, if he hadn't the same day met with a better engagement than he had had before. So the steamboat community was saved a scandal.

I made the best terms I could with my late employer's creditors, and went down to Victoria again to make a fresh start at something. 'Something' seemed very loth to turn up though. I got a little employment on the newspapers now and then, but having lost my friend Como I could not make much way at this, and found the balance of expenditure *versus* income running steadily against me.

One night I was walking along the main street, contemplatively smoking a cigar, and jingling in a mechanical way in my trousers' pocket the last few dollars that belonged to me; wondering where the deuce any more were to come from, and feeling on very bad terms with myself and the world generally for the wasted years I had lately passed; when I was saluted by an acquaintance:

'Say! you sir, ain't the side walk wide enough for you, without treading on people's toes? Hullo! Why, it's you, is it? Come and have a game of chess with me at Oysterman's, will you?'

I was glad to do anything, and went. When we got inside the place, we saw in a smaller room some people sitting down to play at loo, (unlimited of course) and they immediately asked us to join them. I had hitherto steadily evaded gambling, and at first refused; but presently I thought to myself, 'What's the use of these few dollars I've got left? They'll keep me a day or two, and then I shall infallibly be "broke." I may as well be "broke" at once, if it's to be so; and on the other hand, I may win a good stake.'

I know this reasoning was wrong, and though the impulse that seized me was lucky enough at the time, my good fortune did me little good in the long run, as the sequel will show. I soon lost down to my last dollar, and then the luck took a sudden turn, and pursued me. We played all night; and in the early morning, when our party broke up, I rose from the table with all my pockets well stuffed with gold and five-dollar bills.

My head ached, and I took a turn down by the wharves in the harbour, to get the fumes of smoke and drink blown away by the fresh morning sea-breeze. The glorious sun was streaming forth his splendour over the scene, tinting the snow-capped mountains to

the southward with rose and gold, and making my eyes blink as if I had been an owl. Rather shrinking from the bright morning glare, with a kind of sensation that I was somewhat out of place in it, I stretched myself out on some sacks of grain to think over my strange luck and how I should turn it to account; when I fell fast asleep in the act of vowing not to try fortune in the same way again.

I might have lain in this state for an hour or so, when I became conscious of some one being about me; and as my dormant faculties became more aroused, I felt a hand inserted into one of my pockets. I jumped up immediately with a shout, and seized the erring hand, which I found to belong to a nigger drayman. He dropped a handful of notes and gold, and a good deal of the latter rolled away through the chinks in the planking into the water beneath.

I shouted for assistance, as my adversary had drawn a large bowie knife with his other hand, and I was unarmed; but unluckily at that moment no one was within hail. The negro was a large powerful man; so I had enough to do to keep him from having a chance of using his knife, and we struggled about together for two or three minutes, till we got to the edge of the wharf.

I thought he wanted to pitch me over into the water, and didn't care very much if he did do so; for I had now begun to think more of my life than of my trea-

sure, with that unpleasant-looking knife so close to me. Besides I knew I had still another pocketful, if Mr. Nigger got off with what he had dropped in the scramble; and I could get back most of the gold pieces that had rolled through the planking, by diving for them.

Suddenly I bethought me of an old *ruse*, and shouted out to an imaginary individual behind the negro, 'Come along, look sharp!' The result was happy; my opponent's attention was diverted for an instant, I let go my hold on him, and then gave him a vigorous push. He tripped over the cross-piece along the edge of the wharf, and fell into the water; whilst I, unable to restrain myself either, shot head first some distance over him. Coming to the surface, I looked and saw the coloured gentleman (who couldn't swim) holding on like grim death to a pile, with his lips blue, and his face changed from its shiny coal-like black to a dead black-lead looking colour.

He glared at me with horrible hatred, expecting that I should turn the tables on him in the other element we found ourselves in. I certainly felt strongly tempted to force the brute to leave his hold on the pile and sink; and I can remember spying on the shore under the piles a sharp piece of rock, with which I might have struck his hands till he let go; but I overcame the temptation, and swimming close up to him, said:—

'Hold tight, Cuffey! I'll send a friend to help you round to Mr. ——'s (the police magistrate's) *hotel* in a minute.'

I scrambled up some steps, and ran round to the scene of our struggle, where I found the remains of the spoil all right. I took a parting glance over the edge at the negro, who swore at me considerably; and walked up into the street, where I found one or two people beginning to open their stores. When I told my story, two or three of these rushed to a boat, and pulled round to the nigger, who was all but dead with fear and cold. He was a well-known bad character, and subsequently met with the attentions he deserved at the hands of the law, in the shape of ten years in the chain-gang.

After a sleep round the clock, I went at about the same early hour the next morning to the wharf; and taking a boat underneath the piles, stripped myself and dived for the escaped gold pieces, of which I got thirty or forty. I then counted up the total of my winnings, and found it amounted to some fifteen hundred dollars, which I changed into paper money and carefully stowed into my belt this time.

I hadn't decided on any plan yet, and was sitting in the sun to get warm after my plunges; for it being early spring, the water was cold; when an old acquaintance, a runaway midshipman named Walton, came up to me, and by his conversation brought me to an unexpected decision.

'Looking at that schooner, eh! Dick? Pretty little thing, ain't she?' he said.

'Very. Who does she belong to?' I asked.

'Well she's for sale—and don't I just wish I had enough money to buy her, that's all! I'd soon make a fortune among those red-skins. She's about thirty tons, and I'd stow enough whiskey aboard to buy all the skins 'twixt here and Sitka.'

'Yes, and get her forfeited with all your plunder to the Government when you got back, you flat. Do you know what they want for her?'

'About two thousand dollars I think, but I've only got one, worse luck; and there's no chance of borrowing any these times.'

'Well now, look here; you're a sailor, and I shan't be quite a green hand. Suppose I find the other thousand dollars, and we buy her and start off on a trading trip together. What do you say?'

'By Jove, it's just the chance I've been praying for! Done with you!' Walton said; and we at once went to make the necessary enquiries, inspected the little vessel and found her perfect in all things, and before the day was out we were her joint owners.

The next thing was the cargo; that we readily got on credit as owners, and we spent two or three days in running round the town hunting up the articles we wanted, such as Manchester prints, flour, blankets, molasses, boots and shoes, and other staples in favour

with the Indians. I set my face against whiskey, for although three times as great a profit was to be derived from it, the risk was too great, putting moral considerations on one side.

Still, the honest trader who does not traffic in whiskey is at a great disadvantage, for the rascals who do sell it get all the finest skins and furs, and pay only about a third of the price for them. Walton warmly urged this, but finding I was obdurate, he agreed that we should only take enough for our own use.

We had now to complete our crew. Walton, of course, was to be captain, while the trading functions were to be turned over to me. We hired another hand, a stalwart old tar, and sent a messenger across the Sound to the Saw Mills for Pat, who would be invaluable as cook and man-of-all-work. Of course, we should all have to work; though there was little necessity to divide us into watches, as the trading craft in those parts usually anchor at night; the navigation in the gulf, and among the neighbouring islands, being intricate and dangerous.

Pat came over next day, highly delighted at his change of occupation, and to be once more in my company; for he had been much attached to me since I had saved his life. We all worked hard the next day or two getting the cargo on board, and after that was done we got our clearance made out, and prepared to start for a six months' cruise amongst the savages.

I felt extremely happy with the prospect of what I looked forward to as a six months' pleasure trip, and as proud as a peacock at being suddenly transformed into the owner of a vessel, however limited its size. We all spent the last evening at the theatre together, where I remember the late Mr. Charles Kean played that night, and brought people in some cases for hundreds of miles to see him.

With a light breeze we started off the following morning, bidding adieu to our fellow whites for a long time. Fort Rupert was our first stopping-place, some two hundred miles to the northward; and after dodging and waiting for the currents and tides among the islands for three or four days, we anchored off the Indian village.

Walton and I went ashore to inspect the stock of skins in the possession of the natives, and inform them of what we had on board. The red-skins rather turned up their noses when they found that whiskey was not one of our commodities, and Walton said, 'Ah, I told you so, we shall only get a few mangy old rabbit-skins at this rate.'

However, by trying another tack, and inflaming the minds of the squaws with the idea of the finery we had for them on board, they sufficiently worked upon the minds of their lords and masters to induce them to put their wares into canoes, and come off to inspect our stock.

An Indian market is something like a Dutch auction ; an inordinate price is put on everything at first, which descends gradually till a reasonable bargain is struck. The Indians are very keen bargainers, and very soon know the exact value of things, as well as the store-keeper himself. We didn't, therefore, get on very well with these Indians, who were too near civilisation and knew too much ; and moreover, for the same reason, they were far greater rogues and thieves than their more savage brethren. Depend upon it, all civilisation does for an Indian is to develop the bad side of his nature ; poor Artemus Ward was quite right : 'Injins is pison wherever foun' ;' but they are better *au naturel* than any other way.

We went on to Bella Coola on the mainland, and thence to Queen Charlotte's Island and Fort Simpson, northwards still to Stickeen River, on the boundary between British Columbia and what was then Russian America, and continued our voyage far past Sitka to the Aleutian Isles near Behring's Straits.

We were poachers in this part of the world, for the Russian Government allowed no foreign traders in their waters save the monopolising Hudson's Bay Company ; but we didn't care much for the prohibition, as there was only one Russian man-of-war about, and she we knew was comfortably docked at Petropolauski then. This was the best field for our enterprise too, and we didn't feel inclined to give it up for nothing.

We got a lot of very valuable skins here, such as would gladden the eyes of a Russian prince or English dowager. Sea-otters, silver-grey foxes, and many other valuable furs abounded; and though we met with some difficulty in trading, owing to not being acquainted with the numerous different tongues spoken by these natives, who did not understand the Chinook jargon, which is the medium of conversation with the Indians from Stickeen River south to the Columbia, we managed to get rid of most of our cargo, and had to fill up with ballast for the return voyage, which we intended making outside the islands, taking the west coast of Vancouver's Island (then almost *terra incognita*) on our way.

I found this kind of life frightfully monotonous and wearisome after a little. There was at first the excitement of constantly beholding new scenery, the study of the different tribes we came across—most of them differing considerably in minor particulars from one another—and a certain sense of possible danger to be encountered, which kept one from getting dull; but after a time the tedium grew to be insufferable, for the feeling of danger soon wore off from custom, and even continued novelty becomes tiresome. I was never better pleased than when we had got rid of everything but a little stock we had reserved for our hitherto untempted friends on the west coast of Vancouver's Island.

We had already done capitally in a pecuniary sense; and I hugged myself with the idea, that after we had concluded the trip with our venture amongst these untried savages, I should be sufficient of a capitalist to reap the profits of future expeditions without being an active participator in them.

The reader shall hear what these anticipations came to.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNPLEASANT ADVENTURE.

Leaving Queen Charlotte's Island, we made for a place called Quatseemo, at the north of Vancouver's Island. At this point we picked up a native to act as our interpreter on the west coast of the island. This Indian, named Jack, proved of great service, and, wonderful to relate, was faithful to us to the last.

I think this result was produced by our determination to adopt a different moral tone with him, to that ordinarily practised with his brethren; in other words, to make a merit of trusting him instead of constantly showing suspicion. We found the experiment answer; for it put the youngster on his mettle to prove that our faith in him was not misplaced. I believe this to be the only course to adopt with a savage; it acts on his vanity to think that a white man will trust him at all; and the sense of having one's particular vanity gratified is the largest motive for gratitude in return that is known to man. How we like the man or woman who dexterously (or better still, unwittingly) flatters us! Depend upon it, both Damon and Pythias were first-rate flatterers, and each knew the other's weak points, while ignoring his own.

At the next place where we stopped we found the savages to be a miserable, under-sized, and villainous-looking set of scoundrels. We traded but little with them, and kept a very sharp look-out while they were about, for fear of a surprise. At night we had now the broad Pacific to sail away into, and we took care to avail ourselves of the opportunity to keep clear of such bad company as the people on shore.

The following day we reached a considerable village, situated on the shore of a little natural harbour a few miles westward from Esperanza Inlet. We traded away the rest of our stock here, taking the precaution to allow only one canoe at a time to come near us, and prepared to start home to Victoria—now only a few days' sail away.

We had noticed the wind to be blowing strongly from the north-west, a rather unusual circumstance at that season of the year (the end of September), but the little harbour was so surrounded by tree-clad hills that we knew nothing of the extent of the gale that was blowing, till we came round a little headland, and in sight of the bar and the open ocean. The tide was nearly out, and from the appearance of things there could be but little water over the bar; and we didn't know the channel, if there were any indeed. We had of course come in at high-water.

There was plenty of water in the harbour, and we found good anchorage behind another little headland

near its mouth. Here we were obliged to stay until the tide should have risen sufficiently high for us to pass over the bar safely; though the prospect outside was so unpleasant that we should have been glad enough to stop for the night at our anchorage, but for the danger to be apprehended from the Indians, whose village we were unpleasantly close to, now we had shifted our position.

Walton kept a close watch on the shore, and once or twice directed my attention to the unusual amount of excitement among the savages. One old man, who as Jack informed us was the *tyhee* or chief, was haranguing a crowd of the men just at the skirts of the village, and we could see by their gestures that we were the subjects of attention. However, we thought this naturally explained by the fact that we were the first white men who had been there for years probably, if any indeed had preceded us; and we saw that none of the men carried arms about with them, so we hardly anticipated mischief, though I felt a strong presentiment myself that the sooner we were out of the place the better.

Jack, when appealed to, corroborated this view, and told us they were a bad lot on shore. Many, many moons ago, he said, a little Russian schooner, 'all the same as ours,' had been wrecked close by, and this tribe had murdered the crew, and *eaten* them. Jack seemed in terror about his own life, and strongly

advised us to get away as soon as possible, even now if we could. We knew his advice must be disinterested, for an Indian doesn't much care to venture his skin at sea in bad weather when he can avoid it.

We didn't like the cannibal story a bit, but it looked like rushing on certain death to attempt to cross that foaming bar then, and we cast about with a glass for any spot where the smoother water might indicate a channel. We thought we saw such a place nearly close to the farther side of the entrance, but we could not be sure without a closer inspection, and we feared to separate our forces by sending any one away in the little canoe we kept on board to survey the place closely. Under the circumstances, all we could do was to watch the operations of the natives as long as daylight helped us, and when night came on to redouble our vigilance.

As twilight gathered in we saw still greater commotion on shore. The natives were hauling up their canoes, and clearing out all superfluities in the shape of matting, dried fish, masts, &c. This might be only on account of the bad weather, but the signs didn't look pleasant. Poor Jack got in a dreadful fright when he saw these preparations, and prayed us to make for the bar at all hazards, as he was sure the 'Siwashes' meant to attack us in their canoes as soon as night came on.

So impressed were we by all these things, that Pat

and I at once launched our little canoe, and paddled off towards the patch of smooth water, keeping a keen eye as we went on any movements going on behind us. We found, as we expected, that there was a channel, but it was narrow, and the turmoil of the waves outside was so great that we could not be sure whether or no any hidden rocks existed. On the whole our survey could not be pronounced satisfactory, but we returned with the confidence that at least a chance was open to us in the event of things coming to a pass.

On reaching our little vessel again we made the canoe fast to the stern, without hoisting her on deck. Walton and I went below to examine our stock of firearms, and to plan what should be done in an emergency, leaving Pat on deck to watch and report. It was now nearly night. At midnight the tide would be full we knew, for the tides in the west coast of the island are not subject to the same breaks and variations as they are on the eastern side.

The first thing we did was to send Jemmy, the old sailor, up on deck, with orders to cut out of the bulwarks on each side a couple of loopholes, about five or six inches square, and level with the deck. Our bulwarks were only about two feet in height, so that we meant, if we had to open fire, to lie along the deck, and fire through the loopholes. The Indians had nothing but bows and arrows, and wooden spears, we expected; and thus even our slight bulwarks would be

an efficient protection, until the rascals were able to board us.

Next we examined and loaded all our weapons. We had two or three Hudson's Bay muskets, part of our stock-in-trade; these we loaded with bullets and slugs; and four good Colt's revolvers, one each for the white fraternity, and the muskets for Jack to attend to. We were doubtful about Jack now, for we hadn't put him fully to the test yet. I brought him into the cabin. The white tint of fear was plainly visible through his native bronze, and his scared look communicated no pleasant sensations to Walton and me; but he had the courage of despair, I suppose, for he answered boldly enough that the tribe ashore was not friendly with his own, and would be sure to kill and eat him, and that he would fight all he knew how if he had to.

If the worst came to the worst, we had our little cabin to retire into should the savages gain possession of the deck, and if we could not get away through the channel before that came to pass, we could pepper them pretty nicely from that place of vantage, which communicated by a little door with the for'ard hatchway; whence a favourable diversion might also be made. We found some blue lights, too, which we relied upon considerably to frighten our enemies away if they got on deck, and we prefaced a charge upon them by lighting one.

Walton and I agreed that if we saw them coming

near us in force, we should all get on deck and fire a few shots among them before they got close. If we should hit one at a long range, it would probably impress them with a salutary fear of our unknown resources. Everything was to be ready for immediate departure, and the cable cut, if they still persisted in their attack. The gale that was blowing outside was moderated to a gentle breeze in the harbour, sufficiently favourable to carry us to the channel, though but slowly. In the mean time we hoped to keep our assailants off during the few minutes it would take us to reach our point of escape.

All doubt as to the intention of the wretches on shore was soon set at rest by an exclamation from Pat.

'Below thar, bhoys! the blaygairds are stirrin'; an' there's no few of 'em nayther. Com' an' look at 'em for the Lord's sake!'

Walton and I looked round and saw everything trim below, buckled on our six-shooters, put the muskets close to the hatchway ready for use, and hurried on to the deck.

We could see nothing much at first; but when our eyes got accustomed to the deep twilight we saw dimly a number of canoes full of men, moving off from the shore at a distance of about half-a-mile. The canoes were all large ones, and the encumbrances had been removed to enable them to be moved along with greater rapidity and ease.

Soon the two foremost got within a distance of two or three hundred yards, and we told Jack to shout out to them and ask what they wanted. No response came, so we told him to say that if they did not turn back we should fire on them.

This had no effect; they still kept steadily on. Then Pat said to Walton—

'Will I shoot, Captain?' (Pat was a crack shot with a revolver.)

'Yes, curse 'em! Pick off that old scoundrel standing up in the stern if you can; but don't fire too high; we can't waste shots.'

Pat rested his revolver on the edge of the bulwark and fired. One of the Indians dropped his paddle and fell down with a howl, shot through the arm, we supposed, for he immediately stood up again and brandished a spear or some other weapon with the other arm. The two canoes stopped then, amidst much confusion and shouting, and the others came up alongside of them. We again tried Jack's offices as spokesman, but he couldn't make himself heard for the din of voices.

We could see now that they numbered a hundred and fifty or two hundred men, with about twenty canoes, and by this time they were little over a hundred yards away. They hesitated for some time, but they knew nothing of the effect of firearms, and though they were disconcerted by the slight check they had received, the impression plainly was not strong enough to drive

them back. They knew, from having been on board, that there were only five of us, including Jack, and they trusted in their numbers.

They were evidently holding another council as to the plan of attack, for the canoes were all close together, and two or three men were holding forth to the rest. Seeing that they remained quiet, Walton sent Jemmy, Pat and Jack forward to heave the anchor, and thus avoid the necessity of cutting the cable, while I cut the line of a smaller anchor which had held our stern. Sail was set in two or three minutes, and we moved out slowly towards the break in the bar which Pat and I had looked at.

Directly they saw us moving they paddled off sharply towards the place of exit, and, as they travelled very swiftly, were soon ahead of us ready to bar the passage. Then they divided their force, and half the canoes got on the port bow and half on the starboard, still keeping a distance of about a hundred yards.

Walton and I were standing at the tiller discussing what we could do to get out of the scrape with as little bloodshed as possible, when whizz came two or three arrows over our heads, one sticking in the mainsail. There was no mistake about it now, they plainly meant plunder and murder to boot.

'This'll get hot in a minute,' I said, ducking behind the bulwark; 'sit in the hatchway, Walton, with the tiller; don't stand there, for God's sake.'

Walton followed my advice.

'Now, Dick,' said he, 'you do the best you can to drive 'em off. I can't leave the tiller while there's a chance of getting out; but I can manage to take a pop at 'em now and then. Put some cartridges alongside here, and then blaze away at 'em.'

Pat and I took the starboard side, stationing ourselves at the loopholes we had made; and Jemmy and the Indian took similar positions on the port side.

'Now boys,' I said, 'Jemmy and I will fire off our six shots first, and get loaded again while Pat fires his, and Jack shoots off the muskets; and fire steady.' We had already gathered a sufficient stock of ammunition on deck.

I led off by taking aim at the point where the figures looked thickest; for it was black night now. I heard Jemmy's shot follow mine each time, and three or four groans and yells, that made my blood turn cold, assured us that we had not missed our mark every time. Numerous arrows flew through the rigging, and stuck in the sails, but could not touch us under cover.

Quickly reloading, we heard Pat commence to fire; then there was a tremendous noise, and poor Jack's musket blew to pieces; doing no harm luckily, beyond splintering the bulwarks, and frightening Jack out of his wits.

We heard the sound of paddles in all directions; and could not tell at first whether the enemy were

coming upon us, or running away. To our relief it proved to be the latter. They all joined again, and stood off some quarter of a mile ahead.

We had time to think again. What was to be done? The night was so dark, it was madness to face that channel through the bar, unless we were forced to try it. The chances were more than even that we got aground, and were knocked to pieces in a few minutes by the tremendous surf running outside. So we resolved to stand off and on, about where we were, in the hope that the savages would take their lesson and draw off.

The excitement had been so great during the half hour preceding, that we hadn't had time to get afraid even; but when this pause came, I felt a cold perspiration trickling down my back, and rushing down into the cabin for the whiskey bottle I found it was gone. Ah! that was the secret of it all, no doubt; one of the prowling wretches had found it in the daytime, and had stolen it unobserved; two or three of them had got drunk on it, and inflamed the rest with the hope of reaching the same blissful state.

I quickly got another bottle, and we took a good pull all round.

We knew what lengths Indians would go to get fire-water; and my discovery of the loss of the bottle made us more uneasy than before, for it caused us to doubt whether the wretches were finally repulsed, or were

merely counting their losses and taking breath for a fresh attack.

The latter surmise was the correct one. Soon we heard the strokes of the paddles again, as they came down upon us in a body, evidently bent on a *coup de main*. We let them come quite close this time; and then all of us together in the bows (except Walton, who still stuck to his post) blazed among them in rapid succession. Some of them must have been wounded, and one or two killed probably, for groans and splashes arose on every side.

Then I heard two shots from Walton, fired at a canoe which had left the rest and come round towards the stern. I joined him immediately, and we succeeded in driving all our assailants away from that quarter.

'We must run for it now and take the chances, Dick,' he said; 'the Siwashes won't dare to follow us outside, and they're bound to be too many for us here, if they mean business, as they seem to.'

At this moment we heard the splash of a paddle behind us, and ducked instinctively as three or four arrows flew over us, and a heavy spear quivered through the bulwark.

A scuffle was heard forward; they were attempting to board us in the bows! I rushed below for a couple of blue lights, lit one, and ran forward in time to see Jemmy (who was a very powerful man) heave a couple of Indians overboard, and then slash the hands of two

or three clinging to the bow-chains with his bowie knife.

I had just fixed the blue light, when I heard a blow dealt at some one else behind me ; and turning sharply round, I saw Pat holding a hatchet over the dead body of an Indian.

'That was a close shave for ye, misther Dick, an' no mistake,' he said; 'that dead raskil had sneaked aboard, and was jist on the p'int of dhrivin' his spear into ye, whin I settled him!' So saying, he threw the dead body overboard.

The sudden light altogether paralysed our adversaries, and gave us a moment's respite to reload, and commit once more severe execution by its aid. It lit the surface of the water a long way round, and showed us the coveted smooth place in the water close ahead of us. We hoisted our topsails to increase our steerage way, and started a couple more of the lights, amid an exclamation of wonder from the savages, who evidently thought us under the protection of their Great Spirit, and were sore afraid.

Still a few of the bolder ones shot furtive arrows amongst us, out of spite at seeing their prey escaping them. We were nearly out into the open sea, and were making ready to furl the fore and mainsail, which we could barely stand when we got outside into the full force of the gale, from which we had hitherto been sheltered, when poor Walton gave a fearful scream,

and fell down dead—shot through the heart by a stray arrow!

The helm swung round listlessly, and nearly knocked me overboard. Before I could seize it there was a stunning crash; we had struck, and the waves were pouring over us, the spray dashing out the lights in an instant. The others came rushing aft at the same instant, and saw the full extent of our disaster.

Poor brave Walton! my long pent-up feelings gave way at last, even under the dangers that surrounded us. I could only think at the moment of him, who had stuck to his post through it all, without the excitement of actual fighting to bear him up, and he was the only one who had suffered! I cried like a woman over his body, as I thought of his mother and sisters at home, of whom we had often conversed round that little cabin fire, and shuddered as I thought of how I should break it to them. At this point of my thoughts I was roused. How should I break it to them, indeed! Who would break the news of *all* our deaths to friends at home, for what hope was there of any of us? Who, indeed, would ever know of it? After the lapse of many months, people would begin to wonder what had become of us; they would hear of our leaving Quatseemo, and that would be the last of it; they would give us up for lost, and there it would all end; no one would think of exploring that savage coast for traces of us.

Here was the climax indeed; there seemed but little hope for us now. There was no immediate fear of the Indians; they dare hardly venture near where we were again, till daylight showed us to them, and the storm abated; but long ere daylight would come, our little vessel would be dashed into a thousand pieces probably.

'Well, Cap'n, (I calls you Cap'n now poor Mr. Walton's gone) I don't see as we can do anything but stay where we are, and hope for the gale to go down; though a nor'-wester don't often do that in a hurry in these parts, but it *might* shift a bit and blow off the land more, an' then we can get into the little canoe, and paddle off down the coast.'

Talking was difficult; we were all jammed together in the hatchway to save ourselves from being washed or thrown overboard, as every wave lifted and bumped us on to the shoal.

'Do you think we can last it out till morning as the wind is?' I asked.

'We might, perhaps, for the old boat's mighty strong; but then we shall have them darned skunks around agin. We must get away as soon as ever we see a chance; but that canoe wouldn't live a minute now.'

The canoe was floating all right under our lee, bobbing up and down like a cork, while we lay on our beam end almost. We managed with great trouble to

get together some biscuits, a few bottles of brandy, and other provisions, and some blankets, ready to ship into the canoe; we also found some more paddles below, and I stowed some lucifer matches in an oilskin covering in my belt. Then each of us secured his stock of money and valuables about him, and buckled on his revolver, and we stood together ready to get into our frail little canoe if an opportunity should offer, trembling meanwhile lest we should go to pieces beforehand.

In about an hour, as Jemmy had hoped, the wind lulled, and then blew afresh from off the shore. We ceased to bump violently on the sands now, and I even began to have hopes that we might get off altogether when the tide had risen to the full, as the hull did not seem much injured, not more than a foot of water having got into the hold.

I found another blue light, and lit it to examine our position more closely. Then I saw all hope of saving the vessel was gone. Far out beyond us the breakers extended; we had drifted completely out of the channel, and without the aid of a tug at high water we should not be able to move. But there was evidently a smaller channel branching off close beside us, running close round the edge of the western entrance, by which we might get off in the canoe.

We waited a couple of hours longer, when the sea had abated considerably; and hauling in the canoe, we

placed poor Walton's body in her, and the few necessaries we had accumulated, and embarked; keeping along the little channel past the headland at the entrance. We had heard nothing of the Indians for a long time, and concluded they had gone back to their village. The land sheltered us completely when we had passed this point, though it was blowing great guns a little way out. Creeping along shore for five or six miles we came to a tiny little bay, where we ran in, drew up the canoe, and dragging forth our blankets, fell asleep upon them on the shore thoroughly exhausted, and did not stir again till the sun told us it must be midday.

We took a hasty meal and started again, anxious to get farther away from the Indians; although they would be little likely to pursue us, as they would think we had all perished, when they examined the wreck and found none on board. The weather had brightened, and we paddled out at once into deep water, and gave poor Walton a sailor's grave.

In eight or ten days we reached Victoria, thoroughly worn out, and with a hard story to tell, and for me the prospect of another winter to drag through; with enough to live upon comfortably, certainly, for the schooner herself was insured, but with the unpleasant recollection that a nice little fortune had come to grief with her, and without the heart to make another venture of the same kind.

No incident worthy of mention occurred during the winter, which Pat and I, having now become inseparable, passed together; and in the early spring we determined to try our luck once more at the mines, as a final effort, and, if it deserted us again, to leave the country.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BARE ESCAPE OR TWO.

'No more Jack of Clubs, I s'pose, Pat?' I said, as we once more stood on the deck of the steamer bearing us towards the upper country for our final venture.

'Jack o' Clubs be d—rowned!' said he.

'So he would have been, no doubt, if he'd stayed on that charming spot that was christened after him. But I feel spiteful enough to wish him hanged—a more probable ending for him, I guess.' (Jack of Clubs, the founder of the creek of that name, was a noted gambler.)

'An' where will we thry nixt? Faith, it's the Wicklow mountains I'd like to prospect shortly!'

'Well, you'd better take some lessons in *salting* first, and get up a company when you go back there, Pat.'

'Bedad I would, if I thought I'd be able to catch some of the Sassenachs in London—but I wouldn't rob me poor counthrymen sure!'

Salting a claim is a well-known process in gold countries. The value of a claim for gold-bearing purposes is ascertained by washing out a portion of the 'dirt' or

gravel in which the gold is expected to be contained, in a large tin pan, about eighteen inches in diameter, and four or five inches deep. This pan is always carried by the 'prospector,' who uses it for mixing his bread in, and sundry other offices, as well as for its original purpose. The panful of dirt is taken to the water, and by a peculiar shaking and shifting process the whole of the dirt is washed away, except a small quantity of black sand, composed of small fragments of iron, lead, and other metallic substances, through which the gladdened eye of the miner sometimes sees the yellow sparkle of little pieces of gold. Very frequently small rubies, garnets, and other precious stones are in this black sand, as also platinum in minute quantities. But when the spot is likely, and the expectations of speculators are fastened upon it, if the miner is a rascal he will cheat the speculator into a purchase by introducing dexterously some particles of gold into the 'prospect.' He will carry them in his mouth, and drop them quietly into the pan while stooping over it engaged in the process of washing, or he will even hide them in his finger-nails, and work them out into the dirt, or he will sow the bottom of the hole with them over night. These processes are called 'salting;' but they are all clumsy ones after all, and it is only the very inexperienced who are to be thus caught. I've heard of something like it being successfully tried on in North Wales, though, on one occasion.

Poor Pat got into sad trouble the first night at New Westminster, on our way up. He left me to take an evening stroll, and falling in with some old companions, he at the same time fell in with his old vice, drink; and got thoroughly intoxicated. In this state, trying to find his way back to our hotel, his course became erratic, and he stumbled against an Indian. The Indian called him an insulting name, in Chinook, and pushed him roughly, at which Pat's Milesian blood being roused, he found his feet for a few minutes and thrashed the copper-coloured gentleman heartily. The Indian retired from the field, and sought the services of the solitary policeman the proud capital could boast of. This personage, after a search of some hours, found Pat extended comfortably on the side walk, and had the bad grace to arouse him from his slumber, and march him to the strong-house for the few remaining hours of the night. I did not learn his fate till the next morning, when I was sent for, and attended at his worship's court in time to be a witness of the following exposition of the wisdom of its satellite, the policeman.

The Court was crowded with dirty natives, and still dirtier squaws and *papooses*, and the loafing appendages of the town. Pat appeared in the small space reserved as the dock, somewhat crestfallen, and the complainant stood near with his face considerably mauled. Enquiring as to the state of the proceedings, I found Pat had hired the services of an advocate, and had pleaded

drunkenness in mitigation of the assault; but the Judge, notably prejudiced in favour of the Indians against the whites, was inclined to be severe. The policeman, who was in the witness-box, told his story, and the Judge enquired of that functionary:—

'What did the man say when you arrested him?'

'He said he was drunk.'

Judge. 'I want his precise words, just as he uttered them. He did not use the pronoun *he*, did he?'

Witness. Oh! yes he did; he said he was drunk — he acknowledged the corn!'

The Court (getting impatient at witness' stupidity). 'You don't understand me at all. I want the words as he uttered them. Did he say "*I* was drunk?"'

Witness (zealously). 'Oh! no, your Honour; he didn't say you was drunk. I wouldn't allow any man to charge that upon you in my presence!'

A fledgeling attorney, occupying a seat in the court, here desired to air his powers, and said, 'Pshaw! you don't comprehend at all. His Honour means, Did the prisoner say to you, "*I* was drunk?"'

Witness (reflectively). 'Waall, he might have said you was drunk; but I didn't hear him.'

Counsel for the Prisoner. 'What the Court desires is to have you state the prisoner's own words, preserving the precise form of pronoun he made use of in his reply. Was it in the first person, *I*; second person, *thou* or *you*; or in the third person, *he*, *she*, or *it*?

Now then, sir, (with severity) upon your oath, did not my client say, "*I* was drunk"?'

Witness (getting riled): 'No, he didn't say you was drunk neither; but if he had I reckon he wouldn't have lied any, for I helped pack yer home from the "Eureka Saloon" about an hour before.' (Guffaws from the loafers). 'D'yer suppose the poor feller charged the whole Court with being drunk?'

The Judge was obliged to give way after this, and let Pat off with a small fine, and we got aboard the up-river steamboat at once.

After a toilsome foot journey we reached William's Creek, the mining head-quarters, once more. We had agreed that this being our last effort here, we would try some entirely new ground, where no white men had hitherto penetrated. With this intention we purchased a stock of flour, bacon, and other provisions, to last us about a month; took a pick, shovel, and prospecting-pan, and shaped our course towards Bear River, our loads weighing about a hundred pounds a-piece.

Though it was the end of May the snow had not nearly disappeared, there being an average depth of two or three feet left in the woods, through which our route principally lay. This made travelling very difficult, with the loads we carried on our backs. There was no track to follow; we could only keep as close as possible to the course of the river, which rushed impetuously, swollen by the melting snows, through

rugged *cañons* in the mountains, or rolled along through osier-covered swamps, where the beaver built its dams, and thereby added to the marshy character of the soil. In the very early morning, just after the sharp frost that happened every night and rendered the surface of the snow hard, was the only time that travelling was tolerable. So soon as the sun gained any power the surface of the snow softened, and at every few yards down we went through the snow, over the trunk of some fallen tree hidden from sight by the continuous white sheet that met the eye. Then we had occasionally to climb the most impossible-looking places, where I should shudder to go near now, and to go round the backs and over the crests of high mountains, that came down with a sheer unbroken face to the brink of the torrent. Descending the sloping side of such a mountain one morning, I nearly came to grief.

Looking down from the summit, the whole seemed a nice convenient slope at an angle of about 45°. 'Here's a chance,' I said, 'I'll slide down this. Come along, Pat.' Pat didn't see it; but shouldered his pack and plodded carefully down on foot. 'I'll have breakfast ready at the bottom by the time you get there, Pat,' I said, and laying back on my pack, I allowed myself to slide smoothly down on the surface of the snow at a great pace. About half-way down I saw suddenly, breaking through the white space, the *top* of an enormous spruce-tree about thirty yards

ahead! while the snow-covered tops of other trees appeared sloping away beneath it, at about the same angle as that at which I had been descending, looking quite like a continuation of the snowy slope at a short distance. There was evidently a precipice of nearly two hundred feet from the tops to the roots of those nearest spruce-trees, and in a couple of seconds more I should have dashed over it! Close ahead of me, a little on the left, was a young fir. I had no time to stop myself; but I managed to push myself in the direction of this tree, and as I was passing, threw out my arms and clenched hold of it. The impetus I had, aided by the weight of the pack, was so great that it caused the young tree to bend nearly double, and I feared it would break and then I was gone. As it was, my arms were nearly wrenched out of the sockets; but the tree held firm, and I was safe, with a revulsion of feeling that made me as nervous as a baby. Carefully picking my way across, I espied Pat, who had found a way farther round which avoided the sudden break. I was so overcome, and shook so, that I couldn't carry my pack any longer, so taking it off I rolled it down ahead of me till we reached the bottom safely, when I calmed my nerves with a good drink of the miner's beverage, tea, which Pat prepared.

For several days we plodded on in this wise, making but slow progress on account of the terrible roughness of the country and the loads we had to carry. We

were far away from the haunts of white men, and were alone with Nature in its grand primeval beauty. The river began to spread itself into a large stream, marked in its course by piles of bleached drift-wood, in a valley whose width was correspondingly increased. Natural meadows extended for a few miles on either bank till they met the sides of the mountain ridges, clothed with huge fir and spruce-trees sloping mistily upwards in the purple distance, till the vegetation gradually decreased in size and density, and ultimately became lost in the regions of eternal snow, where naught disturbed the sameness of the great horizon of blinding whiteness save a few jagged black peaks too steep for the feathery substance to light upon; and far away to the eastward, in the clear mountain air, could be seen the stupendous and fantastic summits of the Rocky Mountains; these were in the shapes of castles, needle-points, men's faces, and every other curious conceivable thing, and in a brilliant sunrise, or a glowing sunset, the scene was utterly beyond words to describe, or the artist's pencil to paint, in its immeasurable grandeur.

As the valley widened the air grew warmer, the vegetation changed its character, and sterility gave way to plenty. The climate was two months in advance of that in the inhospitable region of Cariboo that we had quitted. The snow had long since melted from the flats; trees, shrubs, and wild flowers bloomed in the warm sun, while numberless berries of all kinds grew

on every bush. Game was abundant, and fish plentiful in the rivers. At night we heard the cry of the moose, the growl of the bear, and the scream of the coyote; and in the daytime grouse and partridges whirred across us at almost every step. It would have been a summer paradise for the hunter, or the lover of wild nature, had access to it been a less arduous task. Pat and I lived like fighting-cocks on the game and fish we killed with such rude weapons as an old revolver (of Irish pattern apparently, for it shot round the corner in the most unmistakable manner) and a little net constructed out of the threads of a flour sack and bent round a branch of willow.

But we had an eye always on the main chance, and tried our prospecting-pan in many a likely-looking spot, though without success sufficient to induce us to undertake the difficulty and expense of conveying implements and provisions to the scene of action. One morning, after tramping for four or five miles, we saw, coming down from the mountain's side across the river at a place where the valley narrowed, a little creek, the banks of which had a favourable appearance for our enterprise, and we resolved to get over to it and end our pilgrimage farther east, as the general lay of the country we were getting into, though beautiful to the artistic eye, was not of the nature to cause rapture to a miner in his industrial capacity.

It was a difficult matter to get across the river, to all

appearances, at the point we stood at. Some forest fire years before had cleared off every stick of timber for miles round, so there was no chance of making a raft. About two miles above, at a narrow part of the stream, where the river rushed past with frightful velocity, we had observed a tall, slim sugar-pine which had been spared from the fire, lying across from bank to bank in the position in which it had been thrown by some Indian a year or two before, judging from its appearance, to effect a crossing; but it was so very thin! like the longest scaffold pole one can imagine, and none of the side branches were trimmed off. We dared not venture to cross on it with our heavy loads, which, with our own weight, would make it sway up and down like a rope, and one false step, or a kick against one of those little side twigs, would have sent either of us to inevitable destruction in the rushing torrent; so we took our way farther down, in hope of finding more trees to enable us to make a raft.

Fortune favoured us sooner than we expected, for in a couple of miles we saw an island in the middle of the stream, and a large pine-tree that had escaped the fire from having stood quite alone, growing close to the bank on our side. We speedily set to work with the axe we carried, and by cutting the tree judiciously, felled it so that the top portion of it fell across on the island, and afforded us a comfortable bridge. The channel on the other side was narrow, and about three

feet deep; so we managed to wade it, though the strength of the stream nearly took us off our legs once or twice. Arrived across we soon made our way back to the little creek we had noticed from the opposite side, and as night was drawing near we lit a fire and cooked supper, after which we lit our pipes, and spreading our blankets on some fir twigs we had chopped off, lay down upon them with our feet to the fire, and talked on our ordinary evening topics after the day's labours were over—home, and the chances of reaching it with a fortune. We meant to prospect the little creek which ran close to us in the morning; and if we failed to find anything, to get back as soon as we could and leave the country altogether to try our luck in Mexico or Australia, or any other place circumstances or our fancy might lead us to. After a little while we crawled under our blankets, and fell into the sound sleep that results from hard work and vigorous health. About two hours after, as near as I could tell by the height of the moon, Pat and I were simultaneously aroused by a terrible growl close by, and, starting up, I seized the axe which lay near to my hand, while Pat drew out the old revolver from under the sack of flour that composed his pillow. We could see nothing at first for the glow of the fire, which still burnt brightly, but we heard a long heavy tramp, and straining our eyes we saw, when accustomed to the darkness, a huge cinnamon bear prowling round and round us in an

almost perfect circle, preserving a distance of about twenty yards. The animal (the most ferocious of its tribe and rarely met with) had no doubt lately come forth from his wintry torpor in some cave up the mountain side, and scenting our cookery, perhaps a mile or two away, with the wonderfully keen scent these creatures possess, had been attracted to satisfy the ravenous appetite he would feel after his long abstinence.

We watched him for some minutes, thoroughly on the *qui vive*, as the reader may suppose. He still kept up his steady perambulation in the circle, with a persistent and untiring slouch that was not pleasant to look upon. How Pat and I both prayed for a rifle, as we followed the steps of his ursine majesty with wary eyes! Seeing at length that he approached no nearer, we took a certain amount of confidence, and discussed the plan of action we should adopt in case of an attack.

In the first place, we knew well that he would never come to very close quarters while the fire kept burning, but there was not so much as a chip within a hundred yards of where we were to make it up with; and it must burn itself out within an hour or two at most. It was plain from Bruin's pertinacity that he meant to have something, either our stores or ourselves; and the latter depended on the former, for we must have starved before we got back if our provisions were lost. It was also certain, whichever object he

had in view, (perhaps he hadn't decided which for himself yet) he would make for it as soon as the fire ceased to deter him. He *might* think better of it and go away, but he didn't look like it. So a quiet escape looking improbable, we had to discuss our fighting resources. The only weapons we possessed were the old revolver of latitudinarian tendencies before-mentioned, the axe, and a pick. It would never do to provoke our enemy by a chance shot, which probably would take no effect, save to wound him, and make him overcome his repugnance to the fire even. We must wait the attack, and not fire till we could make sure of hitting a vital spot. Carefully I took the venerable engine of destruction in hand, and greased its gear with some bacon fat, looked to the loading, and made sure that it would act; for if it played us a trick, as it ofttimes had done, there was a good chance of the life of one of us being forfeited.

Then there were strategical advantages to be looked to. Immediately behind us was a little bank about three feet high, almost encircling us in a horse-shoe form, under the shelter of which we had lain to keep the wind from us. That might be a place of vantage in case of a scrimmage. I proposed at first a bold plan of action, for one of us to run pretty close up to Mr. Bear, and shy a firebrand in his face; rushing back to the shelter of the fire before he could turn. This might frighten him off altogether, if the shot

with the firebrand were a lucky one, and hit him in the face; and we could then hastily gather up some more firewood, and make a big blaze to keep him off till daylight, when he would probably retire altogether. On the other hand it might drive him into uncontrollable rage, with ourselves less ready to meet his attack than if we waited patiently for him. But Pat's head, in spite of his nationality, was cooler than mine.

'I have it, jewel!' he exclaimed; 'I'll stand jist here, an' wait fur me gintleman with the ould pepper-box. Whin he gits tin yards off, I'll plug him, and jump on to the bank besyde ye. Ye'll be standin' there, wid the axe riddy to bring on to his head, av I don't hit him right, an' he springs up afther me. I'll have a sicond thin to give this ould baste (the revolver) a fresh turn, an' take another crack at him. That ought to settle him, shure!'

I fully concurred with Pat, substituting the pick (a heavier weapon, and less likely to turn off) for the axe, and we sat down by the fire calmly awaiting what should happen, but in a state of considerable trepidation I must confess. Mr. Bear didn't go away—not a bit of it. As the fire waxed lower the radius of his circle gradually became less, till, as the last flash of flame leaped out of the fire, he was but a dozen yards away. We followed him round in a smaller circle, keeping the hot embers between him and us. At length he stopped in his shambling gait, stood up on his hind

legs, and took a couple of steps towards where we were standing.

'Ready, Pat?' I shouted, and sprang on to the little bank, with pick uplifted, ready to dash into Bruin's skull.

'Yis, me bhoy, here goes!' and at the same moment Pat fired straight at the bear's chest, and jumped nimbly on to the bank beside me, cocking his revolver ready for another shot.

The bear staggered an instant, for he was wounded almost mortally; and then, with a snort of rage, he rushed at Pat. I struck full at his skull with the pick, but owing to my having to hit sideways at him, it failed to penetrate his brain; it went through his cheek, and sunk deeply into his breast. The second shot from Pat, however, fired at the same instant, did for the monster; it went clean through his heart; he fell down stone dead, and rolled over close to the ashes of the fire.

With a sense of intense relief we looked on our prostrate enemy, and then hastened to gather fuel for a large fire, determined to have no more nocturnal scares, in case the dead bear's mate should come to look for her lord. We soon made an immense blaze, coiled ourselves up once more in our blankets, and after our excitement, and the wakeful hours we had spent, slept like dead men, till the sun was high in the heavens in the morning.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST CHANCE.

Our first business next day was to take the skin from the bear, to carry back to William's Creek as a trophy. Then we dug a little hole, cut Bruin's paws off, and rolled them round in clay, put them in the hole, and piled a fire on the top, so as to have them cooked in the Indian fashion ready for dinner. There is no dainty in the world to come up to the paws of a young bear cooked in this fashion.

We then set to work manfully on the banks and bars of the little creek for some hours, but failed to find anything, and returned to our dinner dispirited. The comforting influence of that meal, and a subsequent pipe, however, once more put us in a proper frame of mind, and we went about two miles farther up towards the source of the creek for a final attempt. Here the ground was shallower, the bed-rock occasionally cropping out close to the surface. When we had cleared away the surface rubbish in an inviting spot, we quickly worked down to the rock, and Pat took a panful of the dirt lying next it to the water, and washed it out. Before he had half done, he shouted out for me. 'Come here, Dick, for the Lord's sake!'

I dropped my pick, wiped my forehead, and scrambled over the rocks and trees to him.

There Pat sat on the ground, with the pan between his legs, looking at it and grinning like an idiot.

'Well, what's up now, another bear?' I said, looking round and puffing hard after my rough scamper.

'Bear be hanged, honey! something betther nor that, sure! What the divil's that, d'ye think?' poking his finger into the dirt left in the pan. 'Ou, Bridget! shure ye'll be a lady now! Pathrick, ye're a gintleman for life!' and he sprang up and danced a wild and heathenish dance, completing it by bringing his hand down on my head with a tremendous smack that nearly stunned me.

Not dreaming of what was really the case, and thinking Pat had certainly gone mad, I got rather savage, and spoke to him in language less polite than forcible.

'Och, ye fule! jist look in the pan, will ye!' was all he deigned to reply.

'What! you don't mean to say we've struck it at last, and in this place?' I said, getting excited myself, though hardly crediting the possibility of luck.

I looked into the half-washed pan of dirt and saw nothing *but* dirt. Pat still kept capering round me, till at last he sat down out of breath and collected.

'Stirr it round wid yer fingers, man!'

I did, and turned over a number of large pebbles.

A moment after, I saw a yellow glitter through the mass; the corner of a little nugget the size of a walnut!

Now I was as excited as Pat. I couldn't do anything, but threw myself down on the ground and closed my eyes; the rush of delight was almost too much for me. Then I got up and rushed to the water again with the pan, washed it out clean, and found at the bottom the little nugget, and several other very small pieces.

How we gloried over our new-found treasure! We sat down and looked at it, filled with ecstatic visions for many minutes, neither of us saying a word. Suddenly an unhappy thought struck me, and I jumped up:—

'But this may be only a little pocket in the rock, Pat, and we may get little or nothing else. Remember we've been sold before many a time.'

'I'd be afraid of that too, 'gin we only had the big lump, but look at thim little darlints' (pointing to the small pieces); 'they look the rale thing!'

We worked away again, clearing a larger space, refilled the pan from a place some yards away, and carefully washed it out. There was no large lump this time, but plenty of little pieces, as big as millet seed, round the rim of the pan. Some dozens of panfuls we tried, with an average result that made us feel sure we had indeed struck the right spot at last.

We would waste no time we resolved, but get back to William's Creek at once for tools and supplies; so

we cut down a young fir, fashioned six large smooth stakes out of it with the axe, measured off two hundred feet apiece down the creek (the extent allowed for a 'discovery claim'), and drove the stakes deep into the ground, writing our names with a pencil on their smoothened surfaces. Then we went back to the side of the main river, ate our supper, and went to bed happier than I have ever done in my life before or since.

All night it poured with rain, but it couldn't touch us much, sheltered under the branches of a giant spruce-tree, which shed the water like an umbrella. We heard the river roaring louder than ever as it rose with the storm, but we heeded not the weather, or the river, or where we were—far away from the world—or aught else but our wondrous luck that night.

In the morning, when we arose, we found the river had risen three feet on its banks in the night, and there was the problem of recrossing before us. The tree we had crossed to the island upon, some miles lower down, would have been carried away by the freshet; or if not, we could not now ford the channel of the river between us and the island. A mile above us an enormous bluff came sheer down to the water's edge, while round this mountain came from another direction a branch of the river nearly as wide as the main stream where we now stood. Just at the foot of the big mountain was the long thin tree we had seen thrown across the stream. This seemed our only

chance, without we wandered down many miles farther, and found trees growing near enough to the water to be of use for a raft. Now in our new sense of prospective wealth, the value of our lives seemed to be increased a thousand per cent. since the moment when we had doubtfully glanced upon this very tree from the other side, and shunned it. Time, on the other hand, was important to us, and we did not want to lose three or four days by going farther down the stream than we then were ; so we resolved to try the tree, of which we had observed the butt-end was fortunately lying on our side.

We *cached*, or hid in the Indian fashion, half our provisions, and the tools which we should not want; and then, making up our packs, (of much smaller dimensions than before) we started for the crossing-place.

The spot looked terrible indeed when we reached it. In the centre of the stream, where the tree, from its own weight, was depressed for two or three feet, the water was just rushing against it, and when the weight of a man was placed upon this it would sink it some inches lower. The stream was dashing on with fearful fury, every now and then loosening from its banks large rocks, which fell in with dull heavy splashes, just heard above the roaring of the waters. All the loose drift-wood had been carried down before the river had reached its present height, or it would have dashed against our frail bridge and broken it; but we were

still uncertain that some huge tree, torn up with its roots by the flood, might not come tumbling down, carrying destruction before it.

The rapid above was about a mile long and quite straight, so we could see far enough ahead to make sure that no such accident as this would happen while we were crossing. To give us a small chance of escape, if we should miss our footing and fall over, we altered the fashion of our packs, just fastening them across our chests by a piece of cord, which could be immediately cut with a knife, that each held ready in his hand, in case he felt unable to prevent his going over. If such a catastrophe happened to either of us, he would then at least be free from his pack, and have a chance of getting ashore. Pat's chance would certainly have been a slim one, as he could not swim; but swimming would have been but little use in that place after all; it would simply be a question of whether the current threw a man on shore or into some deep eddy, or possible whirlpool. In the first case, either of us might manage to catch hold of something and scramble out; in the second I should escape easily, but Pat would not, as he would sink so soon as the current failed to hold him up; and in the last, it was certain destruction for either of us.

As we stood deliberating on the bank, not liking the prospect a bit, Pat looked up the stream and exclaimed—

'Here comes somethin' that'll decoide us, anyhow!'

At the head of the rapid a huge mass of tangled roots, timber, and branches made its appearance; every few seconds it would catch against some projection, and stick there for an instant or two, and then the current would again bear it forward.

'I'm goin' to risk it, Dick,' Pat said, and giving a sailor's hitch to his nether garments, clapping his old hat tight on his head, and gripping his knife firmly, he placed his foot on the end of the tree and walked onward with steady steps, steering well clear of the numerous little branches which cropped out of the tree. Of course we would not both go on at once, so I watched Pat till he got to the centre, where the water now rushed half-way up his knee-boots. He wavered a second, but I dared not speak to him. However, he only paused an instant to steady himself, and then went carefully on and reached the other bank in safety, to my great delight.

Then came my essay. I too got along all right over the thicker part, till I reached the centre; but when the water began to rush against my legs, and I could not see plainly where to plant my foot for the next step, it was anything but a pleasant sensation. Like Pat, I stopped for a second or two, and braced myself up. Glancing upwards, I saw the big tree approaching very near, and knew I dare not stand still another moment; so I started again; but just as I was

getting over the worst part, and nearing the shore, I caught my foot against one of those cursed twigs, and as nearly as possible went over. My heart was in my mouth then, but I regained my balance somehow. It made me nervous though, and I felt I could not go on steadily as before; so I made a sort of rush for it, and got close to the bank, where I fell, half in the water and half out, grasping tightly a twig on the bank. Pat seized me by the shoulders at the same moment, and dragged me clear of the raging current that had nearly had me in its deadly embrace. A couple of minutes after down came the great mass of logs, roots first, and with an awful crash broke our bridge into splinters.

We felt quite at home on the other side of the river, and with our loads so much lightened, trudged back at a much quicker rate than we had come, till after a few days we again stood on William's Creek.

The first thing we did there was to register our claim with the Gold Commissioner, giving the nearest description we could as to its locality, and paying proudly the fee of five dollars with some of the gold we had taken from it. Then we had to get a stock of provisions for the season, and tools, such as picks, shovels, axes, whip-saws, hand-saws, and nails. We did not wish to make our party any larger at that time, as two of us would be quite sufficient to work a claim that required no deep-sinking; but we took care to let

our old partners on Jack of Clubs know of it as a secret, and told them to come and take up ground as soon as they could alongside of us. We urgently desired that no strangers should hear of our discovery, as they might come and seek to disturb us if they did not meet with the same luck as ourselves. How to get all those tools and provisions on the spot and to pay for them we did not know. It was several days' journey, and nearly as much as a man could do over that rough country to carry enough to feed himself on the way there and back, without taking the tools into account.

It was therefore evident we should require a small pack-train, and to obtain this boon we should have to tempt some more than usually speculative merchant. I tried several men I had known in the lower country who had set up stores here; but they all declined the venture. At last I met a very decent sort of German Jew, who had a store and a train of animals just in from the lower country. The sight of our gold (quite different in appearance from any he had seen, for a merchant or miner can at once tell what particular creek in the neighbourhood 'dust' comes from) and our accounts, excited him to a great pitch.

'Vell poysh,' said he, 'I guess I'm in mit you.'

'On what terms?' I asked.

'I vinds de grub und de tools, und you givesh me half shares, de bot' ov you.'

'Oh! that's played out,' we said; 'that's rather too much interest on the money.'

'Vell, poysh, ye sees, it might pe all a schvindle, do' if de bag-drain goes to dat blase, I don't see vot you're to do mit de dingsh excebd ead 'em. Bot de oder day I vosh had de vorst vay by a green yong Englishman as I dought, mit de hair still growin' on his teeth. I dells you.'

'He zees a pair ov green planket pantsh hangin' op in de shtore; 'e vos all raggit as *der teufel*, *aber* eesh bootsh vosh goot. I seed de bootsh, und I dought 'e vosh on de shkvare. "Ow mosh vor de pantsh, mishter?" 'e sayd. "Dwenty dollarsh," I says. 'E didn't zeem to mind mosh, und dook 'em down from de nail; dehn 'e says, "Gan I dry dem pantsh on behint dat pile ov vlour, mishter?" "Zaretainly," I says, und 'e dries 'em on. Dey didn't vit 'im very vell, bot 'e didn't zeem to mind mosh. 'E drew eesh ole rags outside, und 'e valksh op to me. I deedn't like to zee 'im drow dem ole dingsh avay, vor I dought, "Vare dehn is eesh coledost; 'e deedn't dake nodin' out ov de bockids."

'Ven 'e getsh to me 'e says, "My name'sh Peel Shnooksh." I pows to 'im. "I vorksh in de Meadowsh Claim; vill you pook dem pantsh to me till nexsht veek after ve voshes op?" "No, I von't," I says. I knew dey never voshes no gold op in dat claim, und never vill. "Bot you mosht," he says. "Dake 'em off direc'ly *und gehen sie aus*," I says, for I vos kvite riled, "I only teals foor cash mit stranchers." "Vy, you tam Chew," 'e vent on; "vould you dake de pantsh off a

man's legsh?" und 'e valked out into de ztreet, mit my coot green planket pantsh. I zhouts afder 'im; aber it vosh no coot, 'e didn't zeem to mind mosh!'

The son of Israel was much carried away by emotion here, and nearly wept. When his feelings became soothed by a drink, in which he invited us to share, we proceeded again to our immediate business with him, and came to an arrangement.

Ten animals out of his pack-train were to be retained, and loaded with the provisions and tools, while the rest were sent back down the country again. Pat, Schwartz (the Jew), and myself, with only one extra man, were to go with these ten animals to our destination. The arrangement was that Schwartz should supply our cargo, in consideration of our taking up an additional hundred feet for him besides our own, and throwing it into one claim, paying the extra man to represent Schwartz's interest ten dollars a day out of the total proceeds.

We carefully avoided telling the extra man where we were going to, lest he should get talkative at some of the saloons overnight.

We had a festive evening together, and next morning packed the animals with every necessary, and a few comparative luxuries, such as dried apples, &c., which we thought ourselves qualified to enjoy now, and drove them quietly down William's Creek, intending to reach Antler Creek, the head waters of Bear

River, by a different and less known route than that ordinarily taken. We took this time a couple of good rifles, which Schwartz got for us, and a sufficient supply of ammunition.

Going down the creek (close by the Meadows Claim, that name of sorrow to Schwartz) we turned off to the right, through a broad pass in the mountains, and readily got out of sight of all enquiring eyes. The way across was very decent for the first day's travel, at the end of which we came to a tremendous *cañon* where Grouse Creek falls into Antler Creek, or Bear River. After this, for a couple of days, the travelling was something fearful; we only made about twelve miles, and the poor animals were dreadfully used up even then. But when we came to the more open country I have before described, we got on famously, and soon reached a spot a couple of miles above our creek, on the opposite side; and here, as there were plenty of trees, we cut logs and made a raft, pegging it together, and binding it with osier branches.

The snow had all melted off in the upper country during the time we had been absent, and the river had come down to its ordinary summer level. We found no difficulty in floating our empty raft, checked by a tow-rope from the shore, down the rapid, till it reached a point a little way above the creek. Here the water was much more still, and we could, by the aid of some

poles we had cut, easily push the raft across after we had loaded it.

We unpacked the animal's loads, and turned the creatures off to feed on the rich natural grass; and in two or three trips with the raft we got everything across to the mouth of the little creek. Then we all (including the merchant, who shouldered his hundred pounds' weight like a man) aided in packing our stores for two or three miles up the claim. This took us a couple of days in all to accomplish, as we had to make many journeys to and fro.

After this we cut down and fashioned some logs to build a snug log-hut with, and got them up in three days, when by preconcerted arrangement Schwartz and I left Pat and the extra man to complete the cabin, saw some boards for sluice-boxes, and bring a head of water, from some distance above, on to the claim by means of a ditch; while we drove back the horses to William's Creek, where Schwartz also registered his claim; I returning as soon as possible alone to the scene of wealth. Before we started we fully satisfied Schwartz, and ourselves too, of the *bona fides* of our concern.

When I got back I told our old particular friends on Jack of Clubs where they might find us, and invited them to come; and then I set off alone, with a light pack and my rifle, and on my return found the cabin nicely finished, with the water brought on to the

claim, and running through a string of sluices, just completed the day before, into which Pat and Jim, the extra man, were shovelling from alternate sides. They had certainly worked like tigers during the fortnight I had been away.

No one appeared during the first three months, but at the end of that time Schwartz and another man turned up with four or five horses laden with more provisions and a fresh supply of tools, for we had no blacksmith's shop at which to sharpen our picks. We had a pretty little heap of dust to place on the horses' backs on the return journey, when Pat accompanied Schwartz, and placed our treasure in safe custody in the bank.

Several persons of enquiring mind got wind of this second expedition, and shortly after Pat's return we had an invasion of twenty or thirty men, at the head of whom I recognised the man whom Schwartz had last brought with him. They did not molest us, however, as there was plenty of room for all of us, but set to work diligently, and we were rather glad of their company than otherwise. The little colony in the wilderness looked quite lively with its six or seven log-huts. The sound of the axe rang through the woods; the voices of men cheered the solitude, and the hitherto pellucid waters of the tiny mountain stream were rendered muddy and turbid by the unknown uses it had been put to in disintegrating

the banks that had held in its course for countless centuries.

By the end of the season our claim was nearly worked out, and we disposed of the remaining ground at a moderate price to some of our old Jack of Clubs friends, who had lately come over and been at work close to us.

Our ground, the first picked upon, had by a chance often met with in the precarious pursuit of mining, turned out to be by far the richest spot on the creek; and after clearing everything, we found ourselves the lucky possessors of a very considerable sum for about five months' work. Schwartz made a better investment with us than he did in the case of the 'creen blanket pantsh.'

Pat and I rode to the mouth of the Quesnelle, took the steamer (lately constructed) thence to Soda Creek, and travelled down from there in the stage (a luxury also only recently started) like the great swells we were by that time. It is needless to say that in Victoria, as in other places, we were much more respected than we had ever been previously, when folks knew that we had something considerable to our account at the Bank. Once more did the great Como air his rustling powers, but without appreciable effect. One or two more glowing articles on 'Our Resources, Internal and Otherwise,' appeared, in which Pat and myself were gracefully alluded to as 'two of our leading and daring

pioneers;' but they were soon stopped when it was discovered by judicious pumping that we did not mean to sow our newly-gotten riches in that country; and a counterblast inveighing against the greedy ungratefulness of persons who made their money in the country, and would not spend it there, was given forth to an outraged public.

CONCLUSION.

Pat turned out to be the wisest man I knew. Ambition was no leading feature of his character, and he had now enough to make *him* rich for life; so, after ransacking the dry-goods stores for suitable apparel, and getting a gorgeous gold chain and a diamond brooch-pin, he took a first-cabin passage home; whence he wrote to me a couple of years after (and the letter was nine months reaching me), to say that he and Bridget were the lucky possessors of a little freehold farm close to his old home, where they were as happy and contented as the day was long. He had no present inclination, he hinted, to prospect the Wicklow mountains, but he hoped that I'd shortly return home and settle down, when I might attempt that feat if I wasn't tired of gold-hunting yet; if I were, I might prospect his farm at any rate, and sure I'd soon find the bed-rock of a welcome home with him and 'darlint Bridget,' who sent her love to the Sassenach, with a message that she'd regretfully christened their boy with 'that haythenish Saxon name Richard,' for the sake of old associations.

For my own part, I was not content to go home and settle down so soon. I felt inflated with a sense of

modest capital, and deemed it a natural certainty that I could soon increase it to absolute wealth. Delusive vision!—the run of luck did not last long.

I hunted up my old friend the captain, and found that Fortune hadn't been very kind to him lately. It was one of the happiest moments of my life to be able to repay his kindness to myself by starting him on his legs again.

I saw something of him for two or three years after this, and his good and bad fortune varied as it does with most men. The last time I heard of him he had settled down in Salt Lake City, the part-owner of a silver mine which he had the good fortune to discover in Nevada, and one of Brigham Young's deacons. He says his life is joyous and contented: he, too, has a farm, and flocks and herds (whether of cattle or children, I know not). Whiskey is scarce in the settlement, but otherwise there is naught of bitter to tinge the sweets of existence. There is no fighting to be done there: he leaves all that to his wives. 'Will I come over the Nevadas an' take a hand?' Well, I may some day, perhaps.

My first partner, who accompanied me to the country, I found still engaged in the whiskey business, and prospering. He had no intention of leaving it while there was no duty on alcohol, and thirsty souls abounded at twelve and a half cents a time. The only thing that could injure his prospects was the fact that

he had become sufficiently Mormonised to take unto himself a 'spiritual' wife—at least so intimated in plainest terms, by its excessive redness, the most prominent feature of the lady's frontispiece. If she had been 'sealed over' as tight as LL whiskey and kept so, it would have been well.

Most of my other old friends I came across, too, in the course of that winter, which I spent very pleasantly; and in the spring I started off with one of these for a fresh series of wanderings in the new territories, the old Ishmaelite leaven being still strong within me.

I close this little volume with our re-arrival at San Francisco, whence we intended journeying to Washoe, the great silver-mining district.

Taking now a bird's-eye view of my own career during the three or four years I spent in British Columbia, and a side glance at the lives of others, some less fortunate, and some more so, than myself—and striking a balance of easy lives and hard lives, good results and bad, in a pecuniary sense and otherwise—I find it a difficult matter to draw even my own conclusions as to the advice that should be given to any man who feels the impulse to shake the dust from his feet, and try a new life. To the cool calculating man, who hesitates before he takes the step, and well considers his chances beforehand, advice is hardly necessary; he may be unlucky for a time, but he can in the main be depended on not to let an opportunity

escape when it is presented to him. On the ardent and sanguine-tempered youth, who reasons not on his prospect, but simply acts straight upon his impulse, letting to-morrow care for itself (be he scapegrace or not), advice is thrown away, for he certainly will not heed it; nothing but hard experience will teach him the lessons of prudence and forethought. But there is a middle type between these two, to whom the general experience of others who have walked before them over the ground they mean to try may possibly be useful.

Well then, referring to emigration in its most general sense, there are three words which will sufficiently indicate the three classes of people to whom I address these few remarks. The three words are Brains, Money, and Muscle.

The reader must not fancy that I have placed these three words in the order in which the properties they represent are to be appreciated from the point of view we are taking. On the contrary, they should rather be valued in the order in which Bassanio valued the three caskets for his purpose—gold, silver, lead. As I will presently show, the last of the three, having regard to capital invested, gives the best return.

We cannot expect every man to be an Admirable Crichton, and own a combination of all these three desiderata (I don't remember, by the way, whether Mr. Crichton had his pockets well lined or not); of

course the more of them that are centred in one man the better for him. Such fortunate people, however, can have no necessity to leave home; if they do so, they are only to be regarded as pleasure-seekers or eccentrics, and accordingly these triple-barrelled gentry may be dropped out of the list.

Brains.—The possessor of this commodity, with nothing to qualify it, is far better off in remaining where he has a market for it; in polished and appreciative communities, where he may have the sympathetic aid of his fellows and of wealthy patrons. The problem of life is simplified in new countries; man is brought more directly in relation with mother earth, who supplies all our wants, than in old ones; the numerous classes of middle-men that spring forth from the luxurious habits and superabundant wealth of thickly-populated districts, and flourish upon them, exist not here; the only middle-men are traders and artisans, and these have no aristocracy of birth, wealth, or position, for patrons; they are but the necessary servants of the great producing element—the tillers of the earth, and the delvers for its buried riches. But there must yet be satellites to hang upon so simply framed a society as this even, you will say; there must be lawyers, doctors, parsons (I preserve the same 'casket' order, reader, if you please). Yes, while flesh is weak, there will always be need of a greater or lesser number of these gentlemen everywhere; but when you hear

the old colonial cry of 'There is room for all,' bear in mind that it applies to a colonist pure and simple, and not to a satellite. There *is* room for any number of the one sort, who only bring forth for their own benefit, and that of their fellows, what would otherwise remain unproductive on the surface of the earth, or hidden in its bowels; but there is little room for the other, who take their honey from the bees themselves, and not from the limitless bounty of nature; they but impoverish the section of humanity they dwell with, and do not enrich it. Therefore, be you lawyer, doctor, or parson, if you have made up your mind to go to a new country, be sure to get there among the first batch, or your chance will be comparatively small.

Money.—When I speak of a man with money, I don't mean a Crœsus;—he, as an American would forcibly, if not elegantly, say, 'can do just as he darn pleases' anywhere—but of a person who has a respectable sum at his disposal, hardly sufficient to keep him in the position he would like to move in at home, but enough to give him a fair start in a place where the absence of excessive competition enables him to turn a small capital to good account. Still less do I allude to any one of my species who may happen to be in the condition I have just pointed out, but to whom nature has denied a fair share of brains. On the faith of the old saying, 'That fools and their money are soon parted,' such a one had better stick to his place of

birth, where he may be presumed to be better acquainted with, and able to detect, the arts in vogue amongst those great Communists, thieves in general, than he would be in a strange land, where the first bait held out to him which had the spice of novelty about it would probably entrap him. I have in mind now the average man of moderate means and enterprise, with the requisite ability to hold his own as a storekeeper or farmer, and with sufficient virility to turn his hand to whatever should turn up, if through evil fortune he should find himself reduced to a lower level than he expected. To him I would say, if you are content to risk the loss of the modest competence you now enjoy, in the hope of becoming rich, emigrate by all means; the new worlds are before you; there your capital will fructify rapidly, or as easily and swiftly dissipate itself. But if it does the last you may soon start afresh—that you cannot hope to do if ruin falls upon you here; there your home comforts will be less, but so also will be your cares; for there, though you may meet with temporary failure and trouble, perseverance and a stout heart will land you clear at last; and in the knowledge of this you may be happy, and free from the harassing fears that beset you now.

Muscle.—Now the man of sinews is essentially a free agent anywhere in many respects; he has no ties of property to chain him to a particular spot, and he carries his capital in a bank that can only be robbed

or fail from the common natural causes of sickness or death. But in the old world there are many and almost insuperable obstacles to his upward path in life; society is overburdened with the numerical strength of his class, and thus he dreads each one of his fellows as a rival, and is tempted to use all means to secure to himself, at the expense of his brethren, the bare sustenance that alone he can hope to obtain; as flies, thrown into a glass of water, will clamber on the backs of others, and submerge them to keep their own heads above water: his market is limited, and, unlike the moneyed capitalist, he cannot live upon the fund itself, it must be exercised to produce a living for its owner. So small here also is the interest his capital bears, that he can never hope to attain a higher grade than that in which he first started; all he can expect to do, by means of great industry and economy, is to save a small sum to provide against evil days, or to take him away from his present surroundings. In new countries, however, all these latter conditions are reversed; he is not the slave of society, society is his; for it is by his aid alone that it can hope to found itself in its new home; he is sought for, and welcomed with open arms, not repulsed; his strong frame there represents one added unit of production from a boundless and untouched field of wealth which would otherwise be fallow, not an additional supplicant for the alms of society, derived from a circumscribed and

over-farmed enclosure. Therefore it seems plain, from every point of view, that the labourer or mechanic is the most fitting subject to emigrate; he has few ties to break; no capital to risk, save such as he cannot lose; he leaves a bare precarious existence for the certainty of a comfortable home, with the impending chance of much more than that always open to him as the result of energy. For him emigration is no speculation, it is a sure venture.

But there is one temptation to all classes against which a special warning is necessary; for prevalent as the vice is here, it is as nothing to its almost universal sway in many new countries—that temptation, of course, is drink. It is very easy to explain the hold it takes upon men there; they have left behind them the customary checks of their family circle, and from the spareness of the female population, they meet with little of the restraining influence of women's society. They are deprived of most of their former innocent pleasures and excitements, and hasten to create a spurious conviviality in their stead. Now I care not who or what the man may be, if he abstains from drink (yet I don't at all mean to say he need be a teetotaller), he *must* have a chance; and even if after a few years' trial he has not succeeded in a pecuniary sense, he will have gained a rich and varied experience of the world and the people in it, which no money can purchase.

I abstain from saying anything of my opinion of the best place to emigrate to. It is far too wide a question, and depends almost entirely upon the qualifications and capabilities of the individual; but the scene of this book is laid almost entirely in British Columbia, and therefore, perhaps, with reference to others going there, I should add a few concluding words concerning it.

In the first place, then, as the reader may have gathered, it is one of the roughest, wildest countries on the face of the earth. The climate is variable, but on the whole exceedingly healthy for persons of decently robust constitutions. I don't think it a place for a delicate person to go to, for he could not bear the hardships he may expect to encounter in the course of the many changes in calling and location that are likely to be necessary to him. Judging from statistics, the colony has not yet answered the first expectations formed of it; the population has decreased, instead of multiplied, in the last eight or nine years. The gold mines in it were very rich, but circumscribed in extent; they are the main stay of the country; and as those first discovered are nearly worked out, and no new ones of sufficient importance are found to supply their places, the decline of the population is to be accounted for. Another great drawback is the deficiency of agricultural land. I have seen many shameful accounts published by interested persons,

from which one would imagine the country to have been the original site of the garden of Eden. The real fact is that it depends on California and Oregon for almost every pound of flour that is consumed in it; and that, compared to these neighbouring countries, it *is* what I have heard it before described by a person who knew it well—'a howling wilderness.'

On the other hand, I maintain that, owing to its inherent defects of sterility and impracticability for travelling purposes, the colony has never had a fair chance. It is not from its nature a place to entice people of wealth to stay in it; many a fortune has been made there, and carried away to pleasanter lands to be spent in. So great is the expense and difficulty of exploration, that denuded as it constantly is at the close of every declining season of a great part of the capital produced in it, there has been hitherto small opportunity of developing the splendid resources that exist in it. These resources, and its sole ones, are, as I have pointed out in a previous chapter, mines, timber, and fisheries.

It is absurd to suppose that so wonderfully rich a spot as William's Creek stands alone in a territory of the extent of British Columbia; yet the whole of the other mines so far discovered in it have not produced as much as this one little creek. The forests contain some of the finest timber in the world, and have the

immense advantage of being close to the sea and the numerous rivers and inlets that indent a great stretch of sea-board. The fisheries—so far as salmon are concerned, at any rate—are simply unapproachable in their wealth.

There is no doubt that an immense impetus will be given to the progress of the colony through its entry into the Canadian dominion.

The great public works contemplated will bring labour and capital to it, the two agents required to generate its progress; and will, coupled with its representation in the Canadian parliament, create a wider and more intimate acquaintance amongst strangers with its real *status*, at present little known or appreciated. The liberal grants made by the dominion towards its revenue should almost serve to keep it clear of taxation, for I don't believe there are at the present time over eight thousand white men in the country, and they solely will reap the benefit of Canadian liberality; the Indians, estimated to number fifty thousand, may be put out of the question in this respect.

It is likely, therefore, that in a few years we shall see British Columbia taking a more prominent stand among our dependencies than it has yet done, and it will then be no bad place for the adventurer to turn his regards to.

To the lover of the chase, who is content to accept the excitement of that life without the lust of gain

interrupting his pursuits, the country should be a very paradise. No better sport, nor more varied, is to be found anywhere, and a man may live well on the produce of his gun and fishing-boat.

Those inhabitants who have for some years now stuck bravely to the colony, in spite of its hardships and their disappointments, deserve all praise. They are a generous, high-spirited people, above petty meannesses, and well imbued with that spirit of good fellowship, without which indeed existence would be almost out of the question in such a place. I bid all my friends there a kind adieu. May they flourish!

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